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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. THOMAS ADAM,

LATE RECTOR OF WINTRINGHAM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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A

SHORT SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR.

THE REV. THOMAS ADAM, author of the following works, was born at Leeds, in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, Feb. 25, 1701; his father, Mr. Henry Adam, was of the profession of the law, and town-clerk of that corporation. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Jasper Blythman, Esq.*, Recorder there, by whom he had six children, Jasper, Henry, Thomas, Katherine, Elizabeth, and Sibyl.

Our author, Thomas, was first put to the public grammar school in that town, under the care of the pious and worthy Mr. Thomas Barnard †, then head master of that school, and afterwards to the school at Wakefield; from whence, about the usual time of life, he went to Christ's College, Cambridge. But, after he had resided there about two years, he removed to Hart-Hall (now Hertford College) in Oxford, under the care of that famous disciplinarian, Dr. Newton, (head of that seminary, and its

* "Elizabeth, the mother of Jasper Blythman, Esq., Recorder of "Leeds, was one of the twenty children of Sir John Stanhope, which "were born and baptized (besides two which were still-born) before "either he or his lady were forty years of age."

† Author of the Life and Character of Lady Elizabeth Hastings.

founder as a college,) for whose memory in that capacity he ever retained the highest respect.

He took the degree of Bachelor of Arts only, as he had imbibed the doctrine of the indefensible nature of pluralities from Dr. Newton, whose masterly treatise on that subject is well known; and, therefore, concluded it a needless expense for him to proceed any farther in academical degrees.

By the interest of an uncle, a person of some eminence in his profession of the law, and who had been of singular service to the family of the patron, about the year 1724 he was presented to the living of Wintringham, in Lincolnshire, of which he continued Rector fifty-eight years; but not being of age to take possession, it was held for him by a friend for about a year.

Not long after he settled at Wintringham, his uncle, who seemed much set upon the advancement of so promising a nephew, urged him greatly to come up to London *to show himself*, as he termed it, concluding this to be the most likely way to recommend him to the favour of those who were most able to advance him in the world: but when Mr. Adam understood that his view was to put him in the way of more preferment, he was so far from embracing this advantageous proposal, that he thought it his duty to decline the invitation in as civil a manner as he could, at the same time returning for answer, *that it was incumbent upon him to be with his flock at Wintringham;* an answer which gave great offence to his uncle, as it frustrated all his well-meant schemes for his promotion and advancement in the church.

Nor did he ever afterwards depart from the same disinterested determination to refuse all additional preferment.

When Dr. Thomas was promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln, our author, whose good behaviour at the

University had gained him the esteem of his governors there, was strongly recommended by them to his peculiar notice, as one whom he would find more especially deserving, amongst his clergy, of his attention and regard. And it is very probable that we find him, in consequence of this, appointed to preach before his lordship at Gainsborough, at his primary visitation there. But how much soever the bishop might be at any time disposed to befriend him, he gave him to understand that he was perfectly satisfied with what he at present had, then not quite £200. per annum, nor ever meant to engage in any second charge.

Not many years after his coming to Wintringham, Mr. Adam thought proper to change his state of life, by marrying Susanna, the eldest daughter of the Rev. Mr. Cooke, vicar of the neighbouring parish of Roxby, by whom he had one only daughter, who died in her infancy; and, after having lived together with much comfort during thirty years or more, in the year 1760, he was called upon to resign this dearest earthly treasure into His hands from whom he had received her. How greatly he was affected by this loss, and the truly Christian manner in which he bore it, will be best shown by a meditation * on the subject, found amongst his papers, in his own hand-writing, after his decease.

There is nothing in our author's history, after this period, which calls for particular notice. An uninteresting sameness of events must almost necessarily attend a life passed in the obscure shade of country retirement. We shall, therefore, dwell upon those parts of his character, as a minister and a Christian, which may furnish some considerations not unworthy of regard and imitation.

From the account which has been already given of Mr. Adam's faithful attachment to his parish at Wintring-

* See No. IV. Appendix.

ham, and his determined refusal of all additional preferment, it is natural for the reader to suppose that he was peculiarly diligent amongst his people, and instant in season and out of season for the conversion and salvation of their souls. But this does not by any means appear to have been the case *at that time:* for, though he was very exact and regular in the discharge of all the public parts of his office, and his sermons had even then a zeal and fervour in them beyond the generality; yet, as he himself afterwards observed to a peculiar friend, "Neither his "life nor his doctrine could be of any peculiar use to "them, for he lived in a conformity to the world, and his "doctrine was *contrary to the cross of Christ* *."

We find in his private reflections (which make a part of his works now submitted to the public) a remark of his own, which will fully show his judgment of the case on the review of it many years afterwards.

"Intrusion into the ministry for worldly ends, and ab-"solute unfitness for it; — in great ignorance of Christ; "— great unconcern for the salvation of souls; — con-"sequent sloth and remissness; — squandering a large "income in sensual pleasure; — and when I was some-"thing awakened, doing what I did in self-dependence "and self-seeking, how awful!"

How long it was after his entrance into the ministry, before it pleased God to give him a clearer insight into his own state, and the nature of his calling, we cannot exactly determine; though it seems probable that his conscience soon began to be not fully satisfied. All that we can gather on this head with certainty, is, that he re-

* Lest this expression should appear in any degree obscure to some of our readers, we would observe, that what Mr. Adam meant by it, was, that he was not preaching Christ crucified as the foundation of man's hope for pardon and justification with God; but man's righteousness, thus making the cross of Christ of no effect.

ceived his first impressions of a serious kind from the writings of the mystics, particularly from the works of Mr. Law *, which appears to be farther confirmed by the peculiar intimacy which he is well known to have had for many years, in the middle part of his life, with some ministers of these sentiments.

In this state he continued several years, greatly harassed in his mind and conscience; and though now more earnest respecting both his own soul and those of his people, yet a stranger to real peace, and full of continual doubts and fears. He saw indeed the law to be holy, just, and good; but found, after all his utmost care and endeavour to fulfil it, he fell so short of its demands, and was so sinful, that he was continually under its righteous condemnation.

It was not till about the year 1748 that his mind gained any effectual relief. While he continued a disciple of Mr. Law, though growing in a conviction of his sinfulness, and becoming more strict and serious, yet still he could gain no solid peace of conscience. All his strictest mortifications, or multiplied exact performance of duties, were overruled by the more strict law of God, whose divine spirituality he could not attain to perfectly, nor save himself from its just condemnation. In this situation, therefore, his soul was in great distress; and that

* The writings of Mr. Law seem to be principally useful in this respect. They are admirably calculated to awaken the conscience, and beget in the mind of the reader a conviction of the futility of nominal profession, and mere decency of conduct; and have in them such a strength of easy reasoning, level to every capacity, as almost irresistibly wins the reader's assent to the necessity of vital religion. I must beg leave, therefore, to differ from those who would utterly discard them; and to assert, that we have not, perhaps, in the language, a more masterly performance in its way, or a book better calculated to promote a concern about religion, than *Mr. Law's Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.*

which served to heighten it the more was, that he saw the word of God, instead of giving him any ground of comfort against his fears, was, on the contrary, in many places fully against him. Amongst the rest, *the epistle to the Romans* was particularly offensive and distressing to him in this view. He perceived that it evidently struck at and overthrew the very foundation of his hope, and (as he then supposed) made no account of a life of superior piety and godliness. As he was at this time ignorant of God's righteousness, and of any other way of salvation than by the merit of his own goodness, the levelling strain of the apostle was, in a very high degree, grating to his self-righteous pride. He could not bear to see those that were esteemed good men treated only as sinners, and all their best righteousness passed by as of no account towards their justification. Hence he was sensible that St. Paul taught a very different doctrine from that which he held and preached; and that they were directly contrary to each other in the important article of man's justification and acceptance in the sight of God: for being possessed of much good sense and unfeigned honesty of heart, (a leading feature in his character all through life), and being truly desirous to know, and to teach his people the real truth of God's word, he would not suffer his conscience to be pacified and laid asleep with the too common way of persuading himself that both he and the apostle meant, in reality, the same thing, though they evidently appeared so opposite; neither could he bear the thoughts of being a teacher of false doctrine to the people committed to his charge, and that in a point of such essential consequence. Like a worthy and diligent minister of God, therefore, and a faithful pastor of his flock, he was determined to take all possible pains to inform himself clearly on the subject: to this end he applied himself with all his power to every probable source

of information. Hammond, Whitby, Grotius, with other of the most eminent commentators, were consulted with the utmost care and attention;—but all in vain. These gave him no relief*. He found they understood the case no better than himself; and was amazed to see men of sense and understanding take pains to impose upon themselves and others, by labouring to no purpose, with much expense of learning and argument, to reconcile things so diametrically opposite, and to unite two systems which it is the professed design and intention of the apostle to oppose to each other, and to show their necessary and irreconcilable contradiction. Rom. xi. 6.

In this situation of things he went on for some time, determined not to give up the point without obtaining full satisfaction, though to all appearance no nearer than when he first began, and even perplexed more and more. He could not suppose, indeed, that St. Paul could be wrong, being persuaded of the divine inspiration which attended his writings, or that things which he had written were indeed unintelligible, much less that he would really inculcate or encourage licentiousness of life. Like a truly sensible man, he began to suspect that the fault must be in himself, and in the system which he had adopted, and that he had not properly

* From much experience and observation, it was the advice of Mr. Adam, to young divines especially, not to be too forward in taking their sense of the Scriptures from commentators: and we will venture to assert the justice of the caution. —— If it be asked, Where then can we go in cases of difficulty? It is answered, — Where Mr. Adam went, i. e. *to God in prayer*; comparing one part of the word of God with another, and humbly looking to *Him* for his teaching and direction. Let this be duly tried, and we doubt not its success will prove the soundness of the observation. A clear insight will then be often given into the true sense, by such a satisfactory solution as no comment can afford, and our faith stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Psalm cxix. 18. John, vi. 45. James, i. 5.

considered the apostle's doctrine with all its connexions and relations: leaving, therefore, the bewildering guidance of commentators and expositors, he betook himself to the fountain of all knowledge, beseeching God himself to teach and direct him*.

One morning in his study, being much distressed on the subject, he fell down upon his knees before God in prayer, spread his case before the Divine Majesty and Goodness, implored him to pity his distress, and to guide him by his *Holy Spirit* into the right understanding of his own truth. When he arose from his supplication, he took the Greek Testament, and sat himself down to read the six first chapters of the epistle to the Romans, sincerely desirous to be taught of God, and to receive, in the simplicity of a child, the word of *his revelation;* when, to his unspeakable comfort and astonishment, his difficulties vanished;—a most clear and satisfactory light

* While our Author's mind was thus affected, many of his friends and acquaintance feared lest he was going out of his senses, through too great study and care about religion.—This is nothing uncommon. The little attention which most people give to their souls, and the slight views which they have of the evil of sin, together with their lamentable ignorance of the great truths of God's word, make them form that suspicion of all who begin seriously to consider the infinite importance of these things, and to feel their weight; whereas it is only the just and natural effect of a right conviction of sin.—What should call for our distressing grief, if sin against God does not? Or what should engage all our anxiety equally with a concern how we may obtain pardon, and recover the divine favour? Our Author was lost here.—The means which he had tried were ineffectual.—— His own soul and his people's were at stake; and till this great difficulty was solved, it is no wonder that his mind could find no rest. Whoever consults the Scriptures will find that there is nothing new in such circumstances. Psalms vi., xxxii., lxxvii., cxxx., with many other parts, will show a similar situation of things in the minds of the true servants of God in those times, nor has it been otherwise in any age of the church; and, we may venture to assert, that *this madness* (if such it be called) is far wiser than the wisdom of the world.

was given him into this great subject:—he saw the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ alone through faith to be the great subject of the Gospel—the highest display of the divine perfections—the happiest relief for his burthened conscience—and the most powerful principle of all constant and unfeigned holiness of heart and life. He was rejoiced exceedingly; found peace and comfort spring up in his mind; his conscience was purged from guilt through the atoning blood of Christ, and his heart set at liberty to run the way of God's commandments without fear, in a spirit of filial love and holy delight; and from that hour he began to preach salvation *through faith in Jesus Christ alone,* to man, by nature and practice lost, and condemned under the law, and, as his own expression is, *always a sinner* *.

His sermons, though before animated by an honest zeal, were no longer mere lectures of morality, or filled only with legal condemnation. While all godliness in principle and practice was duly enforced, the enlivening display of that glorious Saviour, whose worth and excellence he had now tasted, and who was become all his salvation and all his desire, seasoned every discourse.

Those excellent and searching lectures on the church catechism, which have met with the general approbation of good men, and have passed through several editions, and which discover, in so eminent a manner, the able divine and the experienced Christian, were the early fruit of this alteration in his views of Christianity; a happy evidence of the great benefit which he had hereby re-

* In gratitude to God for his great mercy in opening his eyes, as well as to assist such of his fellow-creatures as might be in his case; he afterwards, in the year 1771, published a paraphrase of the eleven first chapters of the epistle to the Romans, (in which all the doctrinal part is contained,) where the reader will find the whole scheme of our redemption laid open in a most clear and masterly manner, with many excellent improvements and observations.

ceived, and of his earnest zeal and ability to communicate it for the advantage of others.

About the time that this change took place, he stumbled (to use his own expression in the case) on some of the writings of that famous champion of the reformation, Martin Luther. If he had seen these in his former state, when he was well contented with his own righteousness, we may justly suppose he would at once have rejected them with the utmost disdain and abhorrence, as the very quintessence of Antinomianism; and however he might reverence St. Paul, as being an inspired apostle, would have made no hesitation to have spurned them from him, as contrary to the Gospel of Christ, and subversive of all true godliness. This many, doubtless, have done through want of the same divine teaching respecting their real state, of which Mr. Adam was now happily become the subject. But his mind being now brought down, and, by the discipline of the law, convincing him deeply of his sinfulness, even in his best state, he was so far from being offended at the boldness of expression* and freedom of sentiment which he there met

* It will readily be allowed, that there are in the writings of Martin Luther some expressions which seem to savour of Antinomianism, and from which imputation it would be very difficult to defend them against a critical scrutiny; — but that they were never meant in that light is evident, not only from their admitting of a very different sense when candidly considered with their context, but from Luther's writings against the Anabaptists of his times on this very account.

The genius and temper of the writer must be considered, as well as the age in which he lived, and the fundamental errors which he combated. He was a plain blunt man, and had an aversion to those softenings which are so fashionable in the present day, and thought they would injure the force of what he said, and make it less pointed against those errors which he had it in his heart to demolish. And although such bold strokes may give offence to those that feel nothing of this real want of a Saviour; yet they that know the urgency of their case, like Mr. Adam, will find them the only remedy that can reach their disorder. And while the cold enervated exactness of the wise and

with, that he perceived them to be the very thing which his soul wanted, and the doctrine of St. Paul; and that however many may affect to admire the one, who yet at the same time reject and make light of the other, they must, in reality, stand or fall together; since they both speak one and the same thing, and all the objections which are prudentially brought against the reformer, lie equally in all their force against the inspired apostle also, and against the doctrine which he so strenuously inculcates.

This celebrated writer, therefore, was always his peculiar favourite; and often would he, with much thankfulness to God, and gratitude of heart, acknowledge to his friends the singular help which he found from his writings, particularly from his excellent comment on the epistle to the Galatians, highly recommending it to their serious perusal, for its admirable use and truly evangelical doctrine *.

In this blessed and happy faith of the Gospel he went on from this time to the very end of his days, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things by his truly Christian life and conversation: nor did increasing years, experience, and reading, give him any ground to alter the opinion which he had now espoused, or to depart from it in

prudent affords them no relief, this will be a balm to their wounded consciences, and the richest cordial to their fainting souls. And may we not add, that the divine blessing, which has in all ages attended Luther's works, is no inconsiderable argument in favour of their truth and soundness?

* From the deficiency of our sources of information respecting Mr. Adam, in this part of his life, it is very difficult to know how to arrange the two last-mentioned circumstances. Of the facts themselves we are certain, but cannot positively affirm that we relate them in their exact order as to time; nor, indeed, is it very material.

any degree; but, on the contrary, he was daily confirmed more and more both in the truth and in the necessity of these doctrines, while he found them, in sickness and in health, a sovereign cordial to his heart, and the alone, but all-sufficient, support of his soul. This testimony he fully bore to them in his last illness, frequently repeating to his friends around him, *I find my foundation able to bear me.*

His departure was full of that serenity and peace which arise from a true acquaintance with Christ and his salvation. His body, worn out with the repeated attacks of his disorder, and with increasing years and infirmity, gradually sunk into the arms of death, while his soul winged its happy flight into the bosom of that blessed Redeemer, who had long been his portion and his all.

On the 31st day of March, 1784, and in the 84th year of his age, he departed without a groan, and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus.

Thus lived and died this eminent servant of Jesus Christ, full of days and full of grace; gathered as a shock of corn in its season into the garner of his heavenly Master. May we have grace to follow his good example; and may the Holy Spirit lead us on by the same way, to the same rest which remaineth for the people of God!

His character, as a scholar, was very respectable. He had learning without ostentation, and, to a good acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics, joined a considerable knowledge of Hebrew and the writings of the fathers. But, though a man of taste, and well able to distinguish himself in the circle of letters, he made it a point of conscience to lay aside the scholar when he addressed his people, and studied to accommodate himself to the capacity of the meanest of his hearers, that none might be unedified.

His views of the ministry were serious and honourable. We have already seen how far he was from looking upon it as a profession of advantage, in the answers which he gave to his uncle and to the Bishop of Lincoln. He could not bear to see or to hear of the prostitution of the sacred character to such low and unworthy ends. A minister of Jesus Christ appeared to him a person devoted to the service of God and the souls of men, and, therefore, not at liberty to live after his own will, and spend his income as he would that of an estate; but, as this is appropriated to him out of the substance of the people for the labour of their souls, he is in all duty and conscience bound to reside amongst them, to lay himself out for their good, and attend to their benefit and instruction. "Meditate upon these things,—give thyself wholly to them,"—was his standing motto for a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

His discourses, which have been already published*, sufficiently show his ability as a divine, and the faithful manner in which he discharged his great office amongst his people: they are full of weighty matter, and are most honest and direct addresses to the heart and conscience. The heart, indeed, was ever his peculiar study. Being deeply acquainted with its exceeding deceitfulness and evil, his attention was always particularly directed here. Hence it was the great object of his ministry to undeceive his fellow-creatures respecting their own imagined righteousness, to detect them to themselves, to strip them of their vain pretences, and to bring them in guilty before God and their consciences. For he well knew, that till this is done, Christ and his salvation are of little or no value. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

* Mr. Adam published a volume of Sermons in 1781, besides some single discourses preached on different occasions.

After the example of his divine Master, it was his constant endeavour to establish true humility as the groundwork of Christ's religion. Not that affected resemblance of it, which is often put on to please the world, and leaves the heart, all the time, unhumbled, and only more pleased with itself, because of this its supposed excellence; but that true lowliness of soul, which is founded in a deep sense of its own sinfulness, and exceeding unworthiness before God. This was the humility which he laboured after for himself and others; a humility proceeding from a divine principle, and influencing the whole man. He pitied the high and inconsiderate profession of many who love to put themselves forward, and to be looked upon as *somebody* in the religious world; and esteemed the complaints and self-accusations of a broken and contrite heart a far better evidence of a Christian state, than the loudest pretensions of the bold and self-confident.

The practical parts of Christianity had ever his most sacred attention and regard, and were strongly enforced as the necessary and inseparable consequence of true saving faith: for, though no man ever gloried more in the cross of Christ, or was more full and clear in maintaining the doctrine of *Christ's blood and righteousness* as the only justification and hope of the soul, yet did he ever in the strongest terms inculcate, that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works*. A strict and conscientious adherence to integrity and uprightness in all our dealings, and to truth and sincerity in our words, was a matter of high consequence in his estimation. Hence he entertained a very unfavourable opinion of the religion of those who could suffer themselves to deal in smuggled or prohibited goods; to neglect the duties of their station and calling; to gratify their pride, at the expense of common honesty, by living above their

* See Letter, No. II. Appendix.

income; or to indulge in needless expenses to the injury of their families, and of their ability to do good in acts of charity and benevolence.

The religious government of the tongue was likewise a subject on which he insisted very strongly, I mean as to its regulation respecting the private concerns or character of our neighbour. Nothing seemed to hurt him more than to hear any one take pleasure in speaking ill of others, or retail slanderous reports to their disadvantage; and he would frequently stop them abruptly, by observing to them, that "the roots of the tongue lie very deep;" or, with that remark, "I seldom see a fault in another but I "look for two in myself, and they generally are not far "to seek."

In the distribution of his time, and the regulation of his family, he observed the most exact order and regularity; not merely on a principle of prudence and the better conducting of his business, but through a religious sense of the importance of his time and substance as talents received from God, and of which he was sensible he must give an account.

His dress, furniture, and mode of living, exhibited a model of the most primitive simplicity; so that in visiting him, you might imagine yourself a guest with one of the ancient fathers, rather than with a divine of the eighteenth century. Nor let any suppose that this proceeded from covetousness, or a base love of money; it arose from a conviction of the exceeding evil of the waste of his talent, a disapprobation of the sumptuous manner of living too fashionable amongst the clergy, and a conscientious care that he might have it in his power to relieve the wants of others.

In the private duties of the closet he was diligent and unremitted. These he considered, not only as a discharge of duty, but as indispensably necessary for the life and support of his soul, and as a principal means of maintain-

ing intercourse with God, and gaining those daily supplies of divine grace, which he stood in continual need of as a minister and as a Christian.

His caution and great candour respecting others were also very remarkable, and highly worthy of imitation; and though he was firmly established in the Gospel faith of salvation by Jesus Christ alone, yet was he ever ready to make great allowances for men's different views of things, and distinguished with much care between an error of the head and one of the heart.

His curate one day asking him what he thought of one of his people, whether the person was a real Christian or not; he seemed to take no notice.—Some days afterwards he called him aside, and said to him,—"Sir, you "asked me the other day what I thought of the state of "A. B., and would probably be surprised that I gave you "no reply; but it was not through inattention.—It is a "point which requires much serious consideration before "we determine on the state of any person;" and then proceeded to give his sentiments with his usual candour.

This is but one instance, out of many, which might be produced in proof of that Christian deliberation which he used in his determinations in general, and of his particular and close attention to the cardinal grace of 1 Cor. xiii. with which few were better acquainted than Mr. Adam.

The same grace of true Christian charity was eminently displayed by him in times of provocation. He was naturally of a very high and warm spirit, and evidently of very quick feelings in cases of this nature. But this served only the more fully to display the power of that divine grace which gave him such happy victory over his passions, that his meekness and humility were the admiration of all that knew him. A clergyman who lived in his family above six years, and had the opportunity of seeing him at all times, and in variety of circumstances,

writes of him thus: "I don't recollect ever to have seen "his temper ruffled above once or twice in all the time "that I lived with him. When any thing happened of a "trying or provoking kind, he used to turn upon his "heel, and say nothing, till he had thought it over, and "examined whether there was indeed a just cause for "anger or not."

But this conquest of himself was not attained to but by hard conflicts, and in the exercise of much labour, watchfulness, and prayer. He was forced to dispute his ground inch by inch, and would often say, "if ever grace "was grafted on a crab-stock, it is surely in me."

In this connexion it would be injustice to omit his forgiveness of injuries. That which was formerly said of Archbishop Cranmer, "Do my Lord of Canterbury a "shrewd turn, and you make him your friend as long as "you live," might with the greatest truth be applied to our worthy author. And often would he requite the ingratitude and rudeness of an ignorant and perverse parishioner, by taking occasion to do him some kind office as soon as possible.

But among all the graces which adorned his Christian profession, his patience and resignation under the afflicting hand of God, were most remarkable. In these he was peculiarly eminent, and exceeded by few that we have either seen or read of. It pleased God to afflict him, for many years before his death, with a disorder of a very peculiar and trying nature, which, through a similarity in some of its symptoms, was, for a time, apprehended to be the *stone*, and the reader will find frequent reference to it, under this description, in the private thoughts: but, through the whole, the power of divine grace shone with a most striking splendour, while nothing but meekness and submission were to be seen in his deportment, and adoration and thankfulness heard from his lips.

A prayer which he composed and made use of on these occasions will give the reader the fullest satisfaction of the truth of this remark *.

His manner was rather peculiar, but it was easy to perceive it to be the result of much conscientious thought. He spake little; but what he said was full of that weight and gravity which bespoke the philosopher and the Christian. Yet this his taciturnity, proceeding also from great natural reserve, must be considered as one of his chief defects, and had its unhappy influence in preventing his greater usefulness, both amongst his people, and his friends in general; and he himself both saw, and often lamented it in this view.

Upon the whole — as a minister — he was conscientious, diligent, and regular — faithfully attentive to his ministry, filling up his office with great integrity, and adorning it by a suitable life and conversation.

As a Christian — he was humble, serious, and devout — a sincere follower of his great Master — sound in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and truly exemplary in every good word and work: an affectionate husband, steady friend — kind neighbour, and indulgent master: and, to sum up all in the words of the worthy clergyman, in his letter before referred to, "If his real character could be held forth, it would well deserve an attentive review and imitation. And though it may be expected that some may think light of it, and others sneer at it, as too precise and primitive, I doubt not he will one day appear great, and be numbered among the worthies, who will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

J. S.

* See Appendix, No. V.

APPENDIX.

[The following LETTERS of Mr. ADAM, written at different times, and two other papers referred to in the foregoing relation, will help to illustrate this short sketch of his character.]

No. I.

To a Lady in Cornwall.

MADAM, Nov. 19, 1756.

PERMIT me to congratulate you on your happy deliverance from the religion in fashion; by which I mean a creditable profession, without that knowledge of the heart which brings us hungering and thirsting to Christ for the relief we want, and which he came from the bosom of the Father to offer us.

That such a profession may consist with a secret deep-rooted love of the world, and indulgence to almost every vanity of it, we have thousands of witnesses who, never suspecting the goodness of their state, cannot bear to have it called in question, and almost necessarily dislike reproach, and hate those who condemn them, by turning from their ways and maxims. This is one of the greatest difficulties in the way of a thorough conversion, and needs all the authority of that dreadful denunciation, "whoso-"ever shall be ashamed of me," &c. to support us under it. I pray God send it with all its weight to your heart and mine, and enable us to make a steady confession of the Gospel in its truth and purity, as opposite to our natural views, tempers, and affections, and calling us to an

experimental knowledge of God, and a new state of holy communion with him.

How delightful a thing it is to count, and not to count but feel, the Christian's gains — faith and fidelity; peace with God through Jesus Christ; a renewed will; increasing love; and hope full of immortality! And how short is the time of our suffering! if, upon the whole, we do suffer, and are not richly compensated, even here, in every condition by the afore-mentioned advantages. Go on, madam, knowing whom you have chosen, and let neither your own weakness, nor the frowns of the world, terrify you. Christ will have his grace exalted, in opposition to all discouraging, unbelieving thoughts from the former; and a faithful acceptance of it, and establishment in it, will make you victorious over the latter.

Never to ask ourselves what our great want is, or what we should ask of God if we might have the wish of our hearts, is great blindness and stupidity; and yet it is the case, not only of the grossly irreligious, but of all those who are in the practice of an external form *only*.

The awakening of the soul from this sleep of nature is necessarily the first step toward a recovery.

To know that we want remission of sin, and strength against it; a will to live to the glory of God, and mercy to save in our very best estate; and that the Gospel comes home to our case in every one of these points, answers all our wishes, and reveals our wants only to relieve them, is illumination in the understanding.

But the great work is still to come, which is the spiritual life of faith, or the closing of the *heart*, resolutely and fully, with this blessed scheme of redemption.

May God Almighty support and bless you in the benefit of this redemption, comfort you in the blood of Christ, and carry you on swiftly in the way of holiness, conformity to the cross, and self-renunciation. As Christ

has wrought salvation by himself, and gotten the victory for us with his own right hand, he must have the whole glory of our recovery. But though he wants nothing of ours to make his payment full weight, and scorns whatever we can offer him by way of purchase, he expects and is well pleased with the free tender of our service; and all he has done and suffered fails of its end, if it does not make us a willing people.

You, dear lady, love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Love him more, that you may be still more happy in him, and taste more of his love. Make communion with him, and access to God by him, the delight of your soul, and the great end you live for. Love his commands, because they are his, and then not one of them will be grievous. Love his friends because they are such; and his enemies, to wish and make them his friends.

I write not to instruct you, who are much higher in the divine school than myself; nor can I have any end in flattering you, as I am unknown. But my desire is to animate you to ardour and perseverance in the glorious race; and my hope is, that, whatever state you are in, you will set no value upon present attainments, but be always pressing on to still greater heights. A progressive state is always a hopeful one, because it is both sincere and self-condemning; and if it has one eye upon perfection, keeps the other steadily fixed on Christ. To him, your Saviour, gracious Helper, and bountiful Rewarder, I commend you, and myself to your prayers, and am, from a far country,

Madam,

Yours in Christian sincerity,

T. ADAM.

No. II.

To the Reverend Mr. B.

DEAR SIR, June 27, 1760.

I AM letters in your debt, and should certainly have wrote before now, if I had not expected you here every week. My wife too has been desiring it with great good will, and some degree of impatience. Alas! she is in a very weak condition, and, I fear, sinking under the infirmities of a broken constitution. God be gracious to her.—Help us with your prayers. I hope she knows her refuge, and flies to it. Nothing in life or death for strong consolation like our great High Priest, and his atonement for sinners. It is very mortifying to nature to be saved as the thief upon the cross was; but there is no other way, and in our best estate we are brands plucked out of the fire. Settle yourself and your hearers upon this ground. If our good works follow us, we are beholden to our faith for them, and to faith, first and last, for our whole salvation. I hear you are labouring hard, in conjunction with Mr. Venn, to whom I desire my best respects. Go on, and the blessing of God go along with you. Keep a watchful eye on the risings of pride. It will beset you on all occasions, and success or disappointment, evil report and good report, will add fuel to it.

I have received a dozen franks from Lord D. for the use of Mr. Venn. I suppose his work goes on. Though it is a delicate affair, his light and spirit will carry him through. *The Whole Duty of Man* is in possession of the general esteem, and in many hands; but for that very reason the insufficiency of it, as not answering the title, should be laid open. To do justice to it, it is

perhaps the completest system of Christian ethics we have. I never read a section of it without being convinced by it of sin; and, in that view, as well as a directory to those who are aiming at perfection under Christ, it is of great use, and cannot be too much commended. The apology commonly made for its defect in not laying the foundation of Christian doctrine, is, that it was wrote at a time when faith was disgraced by practice. Ever since, things have been wheeling about to the other extreme; and there has long been a necessity of insisting on the glorious peculiarities of the Gospel, and reminding men that there is no possibility of being in the way of duty without the love of God; which can never take place in the heart without a sense of redeeming mercy. Moral writing and preaching *only*, is destructive of morality, as it concerns the inward man, and has a fatal tendency to make persons, even of the best natural tempers, fly to an outward decency of behaviour, and lay the weight of their salvation upon it, instead of faith in the pardoning love of God, humbling the soul, and productive of real holiness. Mr. Venn's performance, I imagine, will, in the main, be a working upon this plan; and, I hope, he will convince us of the necessity and great efficacy of Gospel principles, in order to our acceptable obedience; and, that what is too generally thought the whole duty of man, is neither the whole nor the better half of it, but self-deceit, and a poor substitute for them.

I cannot find Rivington's letter to Mr. Venn, but suppose it is of no great consequence. I hoped I should have delivered Mr. Walker's Helps, &c. into your own hands, but, if you do not come shortly, will send it, if you desire it. The archdeacon, who will be glad to see you, told me lately he had wrote for a number of the "Ordina-

"tion Question," but could not get them. Pray tell me whether and how they are to be had. What is become of the man of Truro? I have not heard from him of many months, though my last letter to him was of an interesting nature.

I am obliged to you and Mr. Venn for his sabbath sermon, and heartily wish it may have an effect far and near; but there were some leaves wanting. It is very much to be lamented that men of learning and piety should ever have struck in with the corruption of mankind as they once did in this nation, to weaken the obligation of a command, which is not only of a moral nature, as a guard and security to all the rest, but more especially sacred for its spiritual import, as the soul's call from earth to heaven. Certainly more was intended by it than only to take the yoke of servile labour from off our necks; and the man has no more benefit from it than his beast, who sees nothing else in it but a liberty to skip in his pasture. I trust you are always in the right school, and know that your fall and fever were the lessons of the day; perhaps, you find too, by experience, that knowledge and strength are gained in the school of affliction. I do, for domestic trouble presses hard upon me. What is the use of this but to humble us in the dust, to ground us in the sense of our weakness, and thereby hinder us from thinking a lie of ourselves; to make us call louder, and keep us close to our remedy? Dear sir, God bless you. Come when you can; it is but a day's journey, and you will be heartily welcome to

Your affectionate brother,

THO. ADAM.

No. III.

To the Same,

DEAR SIR, Nov. 4, 1760.

PERHAPS you will wonder when I tell you I am not surprised to hear what has happened at H. Wherever the Gospel is preached there will be mistakes even among the sincere; and opposers will catch at any shadow, and invent falsehoods, to keep off conviction, and harden themselves in the worst of errors. "I an advocate for "the merit of good works!"—I abhor the very sound of the words from my heart, and cannot imagine what there was in my sermons to ground such a misapprehension upon. I thank God, I have long been established in the belief of the 11th article of our church, not being able to find comfort or sure footing any where else; and would ask those miserable mistakers of the Gospel, who are for laying any other foundation, whether they dare say in cool blood that what they think the best action of their lives, or the choicest grace of their souls, will bear to be tried in God's balance; and if not, what will they do with all the rest? There is no trifling here; the soul is lost by sin, and how it can be recovered by actions which have a mixture of sin in them, as the best have, is not to be conceived. The consequence is plain: Salvation is a gift from first to last, altogether free and undeserved; and the man was never humbled, never considered what a fiery trial he has to go through, who can think of challenging it as a debt, in whole or in part. I am not vindicating myself to you and Mr. V. on this point, which I suppose to be quite needless; but give you leave to mention what I have said, wherever you think it may be necessary, and

have pricked my finger, as the poor boy Leaf did, to sign it.*

It is true, in all my discourses, I endeavour, as much as possible, to take in the whole scheme — repentance, faith, holiness; and, if insisting on the last, in its due connexion and for right ends, is preaching up works, I cannot help it. Wo be to those who separate what God has joined; for though faith *alone* saves us, and not according to the common gloss, if it works by love; yet I contend that faith is not faith, if it does not work by love, keep the commandments, and make us new creatures. My dear Mr. V. will be upon his guard, and watch zealously over such of his converts as would make Gospel-grace a pretence for sloth, or low attainments, and, by not building themselves up in their most holy faith, give occasion to the adversaries of the truth to speak reproachfully of it; and I say farther to him, fear not: proceed quietly and steadily in dependence on the arm of the Lord. Let him tell his flock not to give heed to any other Gospel, by whomsoever preached. If he expects to have things go on smoothly, he is sadly out in his reckoning. It is a poor artifice of the father of lies to set me in opposition to him; but this calumny, if despised, will die away of itself.

Those who are influenced by his preaching, and truly awakened, will soon discover what a wretched condition they are in, with respect to works; the rest must fret and speak all manner of evil, and prop themselves, as well as they can, with their own doings. It is something remarkable, that commonly those who have the fewest good works, and are evidently not in a state of careful walking and working, should build most upon them. Ask

* See Fox, vol. iii. p. 306.

them what they mean by it, and you will find it is little more than that they do not pick pockets, and knock down every one they meet.

I desire my love to Mr. and Mrs. V., to whom I write this as well as to you, and am your and their affectionate

THO. ADAM.

No. IV.

On the Death of my Wife.

July 29, 1760.

If I have true *charity*, I need never want a wife. My parish, my family, my relations, my friends, every soul will be the object of my conjugal tenderness, and the exercise of it, from a root of love and obedience to my Saviour, a never-failing source of the purest delight.

I find I have settled that love upon *one* which is due to *all*. This is a painful stroke;—but I am sensible it is in order to another, and a more painful one; and may my God enable me to submit to it, and make it effectual to his own blessed end. Now is the time for a total separation from the world and the flesh, by the sharp knife of circumcision. Now God calls me to a full choice of him. Now Christ says to me, *Wilt thou be made whole?* Now the Spirit stands ready with his purifying fire to do his office in me. Holy and eternal Trinity. Amen.

O my soul, thy lawful comforts have been a snare to thee, and thou hast well nigh ruined thyself by creature-dependence.—Know thy support. Know it is *thy God*.—Know how wretchedly thou hast been deceived, and turn to him that smiteth thee.

O Lord, thou hast struck me to the ground, and what wouldest thou have me to do? I know: Speak it evidently to *my heart*. If my own rebellious will does not oppose thy gracious design, I know I shall not want illumination and help.

I see plainly I am come to the turning point. From this day forward, a life of faith or sensuality;—of heavenly affections or prevailing love of earthly things;—of slavery or freedom;—of self-pleasing or entire devotedness to God.

One chain may bind us as fast to the world as a thousand. I have seemed to myself to be above it in many respects, but am sadly convinced it has all along had possession of me, and that my love of it, though less discernible, was, perhaps, more strong through centring in one object. Oh, that I might be buried in the same grave with her; and that, henceforth, I had nothing to do in the world but to live to Him that died for me, and love God with a pure heart fervently!

It is necessary for me to obliterate as much as possible all such thoughts and remembrances of the deceased as may augment my sorrows, make resignation to God more difficult, and obstruct his salutary operations.

Affliction, in union with grace, works powerfully to the healing of the soul; and if the former does not send us to the latter, we shall not experience the healing benefit of the great Physician. I can now think, if the dear deceased was alive again, what would I not do, forbear, or suffer, for her sake: but if I am not willing to do as much for Christ, what can be the reason of it but want of love?

O, my heart!—Nature has had its turn in great weakness. When I went into the room where she was laid out, the sight of a breathless, extended, icy corpse, so loved,—too much loved,—drew a flood of tears from me, with

many sobs. I had not fortified myself before-hand by prayer and the exercise of resignation.

Blessed be God, I was more strengthened at her funeral, and hope I shall always remember it as an earnest of what he will do for me, upon all occasions, if I fly to his power.

If I look out for ease from the present distress any way but by resignation to the will of God, and desire of complete union with it for the remainder of my life, I take myself out of his hands, suffer without improvement, am still at the mercy of events, and shall be unprepared for my own death.

I have lost the dear partner of my heart, to whom I used to unbosom myself without reserve, and communicate all my thoughts and cares, designs and wishes, joys and griefs, and in the want of her seem to myself as if I were left alone in the midst of a desert. — Recal thyself, O my soul, wake from this stupor of a vain sorrow, and do not indulge a thought to harden thyself in it. *Where is thy God?* If thou hast *him* to go to, what canst thou complain of? Make *him* thy friend and counsellor. He is now inviting and even *forcing* thee into his presence and familiarity. Speak as freely to *him* as thou didst to *her*, and look so well to thyself that thou needest not to be afraid to tell him all thy secrets.

No. V.

A Prayer used by Mr. Adam in a Fit of the Stone.

O Lord, my Maker and Redeemer, I thank thee for all thy goodness to me, thy unworthy creature, and especially for the great mercy of *the stone*. I know thou sendest it for good, that I may make deep search into

myself, and improve the pain of my body to the health and everlasting salvation of my soul. I confess my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, and deserve a more severe chastisement; but thou dispensest thy corrections with unerring wisdom, and I desire to submit myself in all things to thy gracious disposal, and to choose what thou choosest for me. O let me say, by a mighty power from thy grace, *It is good for me that I am afflicted*, that my life may be a continual preparation for death, and death welcome, through a living faith in Christ Jesus, who hath taken out the sting of it, redeemed us unto thee by the blood of his cross, and ensured our justification by his resurrection from the dead.

Bless, I beseech thee, the means used for my ease and recovery; for my help and trust is only in thee; and if thou dost not think it fit to grant my request, enable me to bear what thou layest upon me, without a murmuring thought, and with perfect resignation to thy blessed will.

O Lord God of my life, and of all my mercies, deal with me as thou pleasest. Do thy own work in thy own way. Into thy hands I commend my spirit. Grant me thy peace. Carry me safely through all my trials; and make it the desire of my heart to know, love, and bless thee, and be prepared for the everlasting enjoyment of thee through Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE substance of the following exposition was delivered weekly, in the evening, to an illiterate audience. I mention this, because some passages have a reference to the time and occasion, and because the repeated inculcation of the same thoughts might otherwise be liable to censure. My business, and single aim, was, to instruct and awaken persons in an inferior rank of life, of small attainments in Christian knowledge, and to turn their attention to the great point of redemption by Christ, and his power and will to save them. The exposition, therefore, must, of necessity, be practical or exhortatory, and addressed as much to their affections as understandings. How far it may be profitable to others, I am not able to judge: but can truly say, that the publication of it is owing to the advice, and even importunity of some who perused it; and, if any of the Clergy in parti-

cular, into whose hands it may come, should be induced by it to labour in the same way, on this or any other plan, from a due consideration of the state of their parishes, I shall wish it had been published sooner. I have only to add, that, if these annotations should meet with a favourable reception, they will be * followed by a set of Lectures, which accompanied them, when they were delivered a second time from the pulpit, on Sundays in the afternoon.

* From the manner in which the author expresses himself, it was not quite clear to the Editors, whether his intention was to publish the Exposition and the Lectures together, or separately. They have, however, determined to give them to the public in the way they were delivered by the author to his congregation. The whole is divided into sixty-six sections, each of which, containing an Exposition of the passage, a Lecture, and a Prayer, forms a complete religious exercise for the use of Christian families.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PRELIMINARY LECTURE.

I TOLD you the last Sunday, that I intended, with God's help, to read St. Matthew's Gospel to you; and I then desired you to bring your Bibles, to look on them as I read and expound. The Lord look upon you in mercy, and incline your hearts to the work; to attend duly upon it in this place, to consider what you hear, to read the passage of Scripture over again when you go home, and beg of God to enable you to understand and apply it. Till you do this, no good is to be expected. St. James tells you how it will be with you; you will be "hearers only, deceiving your own selves," forgetting what you hear, or never reducing it to practice. And then, what better are you for that holy word, which was "given you by inspiration of God, to make you wise unto salvation?" What plainer proof can you have that salvation is no part of your concern, and that you are still in a heathenish, unconverted state, than your neglect and wilful ignorance of Scripture? If it was your title-deed to an estate, and

taught you how to get and keep it, or shewed you the way to thrive in this world, there is not one of you would be ignorant of it. Whatever your station and business is, you would find time to know what it contained; if you could not read it, you would get somebody to do it for you; some way or other you would be sure to be well instructed in it, and thoroughly acquainted with it. When it is for your souls, for recovery from death and condemnation, for God, for the knowledge of Christ, and of the way to secure your eternal inheritance in heaven, you have a multitude of vain excuses to plead. You say, you are unlearned. Alas! this is too true; but it is because you choose to be so, and will not read the Scripture to be taught of God. If you did, you would take especial notice of what Christ tells you, and rejoice to hear him saying, that "the poor have the Gospel," the knowledge of the way and means of salvation, therein "preached to them." You would observe how he thanks God, and be very thankful to God for it yourselves, that "he has revealed these things," Christ and his blessed doctrine, "to babes," to the poor and unlearned, to the working part of mankind; surely on purpose that they might know them, as they may, whatever they pretend. You say, you have not time for this. What, not on the Lord's day? when you know in your consciences that it is the work you should be doing, and God has set you at liberty from all other business, on purpose that you might think of your souls, and spend some part of the day in reading your Bibles, to put yourselves in the way to heaven. Indeed, not only then, but often when you do not; when time hangs so heavy upon your hands that you know not what to do with it, and waste it in idle sauntering, or something worse.

My brethren, you know what I say; you know it is the truth; deceive yourselves no longer; be not blind all

your lives; do not lie down in your graves without the knowledge of Christ; if you do, it would have been better for you that you had never been born; and if you have no desire to acquaint yourselves with his word, nor settled purpose of getting it into your hearts, your condition is proved at once to be bad, and is what you should tremble to think of. It was the saying of one, who had great trials in the world, that he should never have held out, if it had not been for the Bible. We have all patience to learn, we have all crosses to bear; but whether they be more or less, we have all souls to save, evil natures to overcome, evil hearts to be changed, sins to be forgiven, faith to get, Christ to get, and grace to keep mercy: and how shall we ever do any thing of this, or resolve to do it, or so much as know what we have to do, if we do not carefully and conscientiously study the Scripture to receive instruction from Christ, and learn the mind and will of God therein declared to us? So do, as ever you would be thought to be in earnest for your souls, as ever you would have hope towards God. Read some portion of it daily; lift up your hearts to God in the reading of it; and beg of him to open it to you; as you read, ask yourselves questions; do this in truth and sincerity, to the end you may find Christ and his salvation, and you will have great rejoicing in yourselves, and great cause to thank God for his gift of the Bible. The same Spirit which gave it will shine into your hearts with it, carry you safely by the light of it through the darkness, dangers, and snares of this mortal state, and make it your guide to eternal glory.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who hast given us thy holy word to enlighten our understandings and deliver us from our natural blindness and ignorance, make us thankful to

thee for this thy inestimable gift, and send down thy Holy Spirit into our hearts to guide us by it into all truth. It is thy will manifested to us for the knowledge of salvation; and if we do not prize and study it, to the end we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, thou knowest it is because we hate instruction, choose to continue in darkness, and despise the offer of eternal life. Give us grace, we beseech thee, to value it as we ought, to read it daily, and so to meditate upon it, that we may discover in it more and more the depth of our misery, and the height of thy mercy, the greatness of our danger, and the glory of our deliverance. Incline our wills to receive the heavenly instructions which thou hast given us; do thou say to the blind eyes, and to the deaf ears, be opened; for without thy help we shall see and not perceive, hear without understanding, and never come to conversion and healing. So work upon, and prepare our hearts, that being established in thy Gospel of grace and forgiveness, we may love thy nature and will, live to thy glory, worship thee in spirit and in truth, choose thee for our portion, delight in approaching thee as a reconciled Father, and long for the full knowledge and enjoyment of thee in heaven, through Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION I.

St. Matthew, i. 1—17.

It was according to prophecy that Christ should be of the seed of Abraham, and particularly of the house and lineage of David; and therefore it was necessary to set this point in a clear light by a recital of his genealogy.

Note: St. Matthew derives his pedigree by Joseph, his supposed father, St. Luke by Mary, his mother, from David; Heli, mentioned Luke iii. 23, as the father of Joseph, being in reality the father of Mary. For Matt. i. 16, Joseph is called, and was, the son of Jacob, and therefore could only be the son of Heli by marriage; which also appears from the writings of the Jews, who speak of Mary as the daughter of Heli: see Bengelius. And both genealogies put the matter out of all doubt that Christ was David's son.

Ver. 19. *Then Joseph her husband being a just man,* &c.—Joseph's character is here placed in an amiable light. His sense of justice and regard to the law would not suffer him to live with her as his wife, after the discovery which probably *she* made to him of her being with child; his good nature, joined to what he saw in her, and, perhaps, some degree of credit, which he gave to her account of the matter, prompted him to put her away in the gentlest and kindest manner. We may suppose he was full of doubts till God relieved him from his perplexity.

Ver. 20. *But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,* &c.—He could have no satisfaction in the case but by a divine testimony, and therefore had it. Do thou also receive it with simplicity of belief. This is making a right

entrance upon the history of our Lord, and in this disposition we shall go on happily with our reading.

—*For that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.*—The new birth of every child of God, we are expressly told, is by the same spirit, John, iii. Look narrowly at the words and actions of Christ, to know what the Holy Ghost must and will be in you, miracles excepted. Aiming at this likeness, in the power of a true faith, is being a Christian; all else is unprofitable hearing.

Ver. 21. *And shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus;* (i. e. the Saviour) *for he shall save his people from their sins.*—His own willing people, accepting him as their Jesus to save them from the guilt, punishment, and power of their sins; making atonement for sin by his death, and removing it from the heart. All, who are saved, are saved as sinners, and only by him. This text stands in the front of the New Testament as the ground-work of the whole, and all that follows is only a farther opening of it. Therefore, understand the sacred import of the name Jesus. Frame a perfect idea of his office in the world, and in *you*. *You* too must call his name Jesus from your own experience. Consider yourself as a guilty, helpless creature, perishing in sin; and then every word he spoke, and every miracle he wrought, will draw you to him for the salvation you want, and can have only in and from *him*.

Ver. 22. *Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,*

Ver. 23. *Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son.*—It must be done, because it was foretold; and it was therefore both foretold, and fulfilled, that we might expect some great thing from this miraculous, divine conception. How great we could never have imagined, if the next words had not told us. Think what

a treasure the Scripture is, and what high things it brings to our knowledge.

—*They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.*—God joined to the human nature, that by this union we might be joined to the divine, and partakers of its blessedness; God with us, in the grace of remission, and the power of his spirit, that in the sense of so great a mercy *we* might be with *him* in heart, will, and affection, for our redemption by him.

Ver. 24. *Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him.*—The divine *command* put an end at once to all his doubts and scruples. Here was a good heart; here is our example: but we do not want direction immediately from heaven in all points of duty, we have it in the Scriptures.

Ver. 25. *And knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born son.*—The words do not necessarily imply that he did afterwards, or had children by her; and the general current of antiquity is against it.

—*And he called his name Jesus*—not only in obedience to God, but through faith in the name.—O Jesus! be thou our Jesus, our Immanuel. Be with us now, and always, in the power of thy holy name; and bless the work we are about, to our present comfort and everlasting salvation.

LECTURE.

My brethren, we have great cause to bless and praise God for the passage of Scripture which has now been read; and it is our own fault if we are not happy in the knowledge and belief of it all our lives, and for ever and ever. The subject is the conception of the eternal Son of God, the blessed Jesus, in the womb of a spotless virgin, to the end that by being born in the human nature

"he might save his people from their sins!"—What can be the meaning of this, but that we must all of necessity be saved from them; that none but he could, and that he certainly will save us, if we come to God by him? What is there in all the world that so nearly concerns us? What is all the knowledge in the world to this? What are all the riches and enjoyments of the world to the comfort of a soul, which has found salvation from sin and is at peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord? Here is a wide field for our thoughts to range in, and a great number of questions present themselves to be answered by every heart: but as I choose to be short in speaking to you upon these occasions, I shall reduce them all to one; and I pray God to come close to your souls with it. Do you think in your consciences that you have any sins to be saved from? I know your answer, one and all, will be, Yes; who lives without sin? who does not know that he is a sinner? But I must tell you at once, that for the most part this is nothing but trifling with the great point in question; and I must endeavour, with the help of God, to clear it up, and carry you into the depth of it. Keep your thoughts awake, be willing to know the state of your souls, as ever you desire to see the salvation of God; and let your hearts, if they can, accompany me with secret prayer for a blessing.

It is said, that "when the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, comes, he will reprove, or convince, the world of sin," John, xvi. 8.; that is, he will make men understand what sin is, how hateful it is to God, how great the guilt of it, and that the wages of sin, of all and every sin, is death. But now suppose the Holy Ghost should convince the whole world of sin, all but yourself, what better are *you* for his office? What nearer are *you* to a saving work? The meaning therefore is farther, that he does and must convince every single soul of its own sin;

and that for this plain reason, because till our eyes are opened to see it, and our danger, misery, and helplessness under it, we can see no want of deliverance and redemption from it, as to our own case; we can see no need of a Saviour; we cannot take one step towards Christ, any more than we should go to a physician to be cured of a distemper which we think we have not, though we had otherwise ever so great an opinion of his skill. The question, therefore, I am asking is, Whether, instead of putting all from you with vain excuses, and saying as you do in a confused, ignorant, unbelieving way, that you do no harm, that others are worse, that all are sinners, that God is merciful, and the like; I say, whether you have been brought to the knowledge of your own sin, of an evil heart, and an evil nature, and of your continual breach of every one of God's commandments, when rightly understood, insomuch that you know with infallible certainty, and all the world cannot persuade you to the contrary, that if there was not another sinner upon earth, you are one yourself? And in this state, knowing from the light of Scripture, that all sin is damnable, do you think no otherwise of yourself than as a lost sinner, and sure to perish, without help and mercy from the Lord? This is the order of the Spirit's work, as set down in Scripture; so he begins with us, and so we must all of necessity begin with ourselves; say and do what you will, he will not alter his method, you can never persuade him to begin his work at the wrong end.

You see then why, though you are baptized in the name of Jesus, and call yourselves Christians, all is hidden from you; you see why you believe little, and do less; why you do not "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place;" why you do not read the Scripture diligently to know as exactly as you can what you must do to be saved; why you do not pray earnestly for a

blessing upon your souls; why you do not despise every thing in comparison of the Christian hope, and Christian salvation. It is because you never put your souls to answer the question, what sin is? It is because you do not, will not know the greatness of your own; it is because you are blind in this leading point, and do not pray more especially for a sight of your sin, the sin of your nature, the sins of your hearts, the sins of your lives; it is because you do not believe the Scripture when it tells you of your unhappy condition in sin, and that if you are not delivered from it, the wrath of God abideth on you. I do not, I dare not say what degree of this sense, or of trouble for sin, is necessary; it may be more or less, as God pleases; and there are some who perplex themselves too much on this account, as thinking they do not grieve enough for sin. But where this sense is not, nothing can follow, no faith, no holiness, no hope. Where sin is not felt and feared, salvation from it will of course be slighted; and those blessed words you have heard to day, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," will be passed over with graceless unconcern, by all who deny, lessen, or excuse their guilt. What the salvation of Jesus is, I must now tell you in a word: to those who look for it at his hands, in the knowledge of their sinful, undone state, he is a Saviour indeed, the Lord from heaven, all they want, and all their souls can desire; he delivers them from their blindness in sin, from the curse of sin, from the power of sin, and from all their spiritual enemies; he is their peace-maker with God, washes them from all spot of sin in his blood, turns their wills to God in obedience, and if they cleave to him in faith and well-doing, will bestow heaven upon them, and be himself their great and everlasting reward.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, we desire to thank thee for all thy mercies; and especially for that holy book, in which thou hast revealed thy covenant of life to perishing sinners. Give us grace to value it as we ought, to read it daily, and so to meditate upon it, that we may discover in it more and more the depth of our misery, and the height of thy mercy; and deliver us from the dreadful guilt of neglecting or despising the means which thou hast, in thy great goodness, appointed for the cure of our blindness and ignorance, in the things which belong to our everlasting peace. Open our understandings, that we may receive the heavenly instructions which thou hast given us; and let thy good Spirit be now and ever present with us, to guide us into all saving truth, and make it effectual to our conversion. Thou madest thy blessed Son to be born of a pure virgin, and calledst his name Jesus, that we might know where to fly for refuge from the guilt that is upon us, and the condemnation that is due to us: we beseech thee, preserve in our souls such a lively sense of the great evil of sin, and of our own sinfulness, of thy dread majesty, of thy infinite purity and holiness, and of thy unspeakable love to us in the offer of thy undeserved mercy, that we may come to the Saviour for healing in his blood, know him to be our Immanuel, and through him be made thy children in a will to all goodness, as well as by adoption and grace. So work upon, and prepare our hearts, that, being established in thy gospel of grace and forgiveness, we may love thy nature and will, live to thy glory, worship thee in spirit and in truth, choose thee for our portion, delight in approaching thee as a reconciled Father, and long for the full knowledge and enjoyment of thee in heaven, through Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION II.

St. Matthew, ii. 1.

Behold, there came wise men from the East.—By what kind of wisdom, or knowledge, they were led to take this journey, we cannot certainly say; and, perhaps, it can only be accounted for by supposing them to be under a divine, supernatural guidance and direction.

Ver. 2. *Saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews?*—What was a *king of the Jews* to them, if they were not brought to the knowledge of his universal, spiritual kingship? What is it to *us*, if we do not unfeignedly acknowledge him under that title, as our Lord and King?

— *For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.*—Whatever they meant by that word, we know what kind of worship is due to him. We too have a *star*, a brighter *star* than they had, "the day spring from on high," the light of Scripture, to guide us to him; and it is our own fault if he himself does not shine into our hearts. O! come, come to him with faith, and longing for all his benefits. What can you say this very hour? Are you come, or are you not?

Ver. 3. *When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*—The Jews understood their prophecies so well, as to expect the Messiah just about that time: and therefore it is no wonder that so strange an event as the coming of these men at this critical season, and the account they gave of it, all Jerusalem should be troubled, i. e. moved, or variously affected; Herod and his party fearing the loss of his kingdom, others with hopes of a deliverer, and all mistaking his business in the world. Let *us* also be moved; and so moved as to inquire carefully into the one great design of his coming.

Ver. 5. *And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea,* &c.—They knew from the prophet Micah that Christ must be born there. Before his coming the point was clear to them beyond contradiction; but, when they found he did not answer their expectations by appearing among them as a temporal prince, this circumstance was no longer regarded. See what worldly hearts can do to wrest the truth from us, and darken the plainest passages of Scripture!

Ver. 8. *That I may come and worship him also.*—Herod stands upon record for his craft and policy to get and preserve his kingdom, and we have a flagrant instance of it in this chapter. Thy heart abhors his cruelty; but dost thou worship the child Jesus in truth and sincerity?

Ver. 9. *And lo, the star which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*—God, who brought them out of their country by the guidance of this star, would not leave his work unfinished, but lighted it up again exactly over the place where it was intended to bring them. Depend upon it, he will do as much for thy soul, and, if thou art in the way to Jesus, thou shalt be directed where to find him.

Ver. 10. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*—They knew, and felt in their hearts, what the angel said to the shepherds, that the birth of this child should be "glad tidings of great joy to all people." When we know what Christ is to us, that he delivers from death, sets our feet in the way of peace, reconciles us to God, and makes us fit for God, we shall know where to look for our joy, and keep a steady eye upon the light which guides us to him.

Ver. 11. *They fell down and worshipped him.*—Happy, happy time, when we can fall down in humble adoration

of him for his love to us, and with earnest desire to experience his power in us!

—*And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*—I suppose the usual presents to princes; or, certainly, what were esteemed the choicest gifts and greatest tokens of respect. What farther mystery there may be in the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, I know not. They seem to point to Isaiah, lx. 6. One thing is plain, those who are of ability should open their treasures to him; and all should honour him with what he most values, the offering of their affections.

Ver. 12. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod.*—God foresaw that the consequence of their not returning to Herod would be the massacre of a great number of infants. Let us bow down before him in a most profound sense of our ignorance, and of his sovereign power, as Lord of life and death. He is wise and good in all his providences; and the child Jesus must be preserved, at any rate, to do the work for which he came into the world. If he had died then, we should *all* have been lost.

Ver. 15. *Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*—Hosea xi. 1. It seems as if this was spoken upon another occasion, and of a thing past, viz. of God's calling or bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. And so we should have thought, if St. Matthew had not told us that it was a *prophecy*, and what *Son* was chiefly intended in it.

Ver. 16. *Sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.*—Knowing Christ to be under that age, and resolving that he should not escape. His craft forsook him; he should have gone, or sent, at first with the

wise men to Bethlehem; now he was too late for his purpose. If we are God's children, we may be sure that he is always watching over us for good.

Ver. 17. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet,* &c.—It is generally supposed that this prophecy had not the murder of the children at Bethlehem in view; and therefore all that St. Matthew means by quoting it is, that it was remarkably applicable to this event, though originally intended of some other. I do not know this. St. Matthew seems to speak otherwise. Many of the prophecies are of large extent; and certainly the Spirit speaking by him is a better interpreter of them than we can pretend to be.

Ver. 22. *Being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.*—Observe how Joseph was directed, from time to time, what to do for the preservation of his precious charge. Cleave to God in all your straits, and he will direct you, though not in a dream: you may trust him in the dark. It is making an excellent use of Scripture to remark the workings of Providence in it, to know it is the same God that ruleth in the earth, and that all events are always in his hands, though we are not *now* told in what manner he conducts them to his own ends.

Ver. 23. *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*—"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" said Nathaniel, John, i. 46. Christ, by being educated and living there, was subject to this reproach; and thus the prophecies, which speak of him as a *despised man,* were fulfilled.

O Jesus, thou wast persecuted from thy birth, and exposed to every kind of disgrace for our sakes: let us be contented and willing to be despised for thine; that

following thee to glory, through meekness, patient suffering, and contempt of the world, we may be exalted with thee, and for thy sake.

LECTURE.

My friends, endeavour to improve by what you have heard to-day; resolve to be the better for all you read and hear; consider it carefully; and beg of God, without which all your reading and hearing will be in vain, to give you the right understanding of it, and grace to apply it to your hearts. For example, *When Jesus was born*, &c. Stop, do not read on till you have asked yourself a necessary question — Why was Jesus, the eternal Son of God, born into the world? Why did he stoop to take our flesh, and become a man like ourselves, sin excepted? It was to be "Immanuel, God with us, to save his people from their sins," as you can answer from the foregoing chapter. Then it is clear as the sun at noon-day, that we are all sinners, and must all of necessity be saved from our sins; and that none but he can be Immanuel, God with us, to save us. Now, can you come close to your souls with another question or two? Why do I read? What am I told this for, but that I may go to him for salvation from my own sin? What can it signify to me that his name is Jesus, or that all the world is saved by him, if I am not? Lay your hand upon your heart, and say farther, Do I really believe in him, and take him for my Saviour? Do not think and say, you do, entertain not any such foolish, presumptuous hope, when it is evident that much the greatest part of you do not, and cannot but know, in your own consciences, that you never came to him for that

purpose, with any true knowledge and conviction of your undone state, and want of his salvation. Will you say, in your own defence, that I judge hardly, and charge you falsely? You would not think so if you were in earnest with God for your souls; if ever you had been at searching work with yourselves, you would be glad to be searched more and more, and condemn me if I did not deal plainly and faithfully with you.

Let us come to the point: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king," that he might be your Saviour, and be born in your hearts; he was the King of the Jews, that he might be your King: you read of the wise men from the East being guided to him by a star, that, with the light of Scripture in your hands, you might be guided to him; rejoice exceedingly, as they did, to find him; fall down and worship him; and present him with what he values above all other gifts, the free-will offering of your hearts. Think of these things one by one; consider all this, and then say, What have you done? Have you been seeking after him, as your treasure and the pearl of great price,—as your Jesus, your All? Have you taken him unfeignedly for your Lord and King to reign over you? Do you receive the book of Scripture as a light from heaven to guide you to him, and resolve not to stop short of him? Has he the worship of your hearts and souls, and is it the joy of your lives to think of what he has done for you? Then you read the Scripture diligently, to know, as exactly as you can, what he would have you to do; you pray in secret for the blessings of Jesus; you conscientiously keep the Lord's sabbaths; the sacrament is a feast to you indeed, and you never defraud your souls of that food; then the form of your lives is godly and serious; you think it your great business upon earth to be fashioning yourselves according to the

will of God; you do not wilfully break any of his commandments; you would not be put out of the straight road to heaven for any thing that the world can give you.

Come, my friends, let us judge ourselves, let us be sincere with God. Some test we must come to. The birth of Jesus is no ordinary blessing; it is to help and save us, and to bring us back again to God. Surely, it behoves us to consider and examine whether we receive and welcome it or not; whether we resolve to keep it, and what we are doing for that purpose. The wise men had a star to guide them to Christ, and followed it joyfully. So have we the word and truth of God, and the Spirit shining into our hearts, to make it light and truth within us; and it is not to be imagined, how any can be satisfied with their state, or think they belong to Christ, or that they are in the way to him, when they do not read the Scripture carefully and conscientiously, to the end they may find Christ in it. Answer this one thing, not to me, but to God, Do you, or do you not? As I said before, somewhere conversion must begin, somehow or other you must be awakened; and I do not see what can sooner make you sensible that all is wrong with you, heart and life, than considering how little you prize that holy book which God has put into your hands to bring you to Christ, and by him to heaven. You must not pretend business, want of time, learning, or capacity. No excuses will be allowed here. Whatever your station and employment is, you can say, "Christ was born that I might know him; he came into the world to save me, and I must be saved by him." And when you know and say this truly, your way is open; salvation is begun in you; as new-born babes, you will "desire the sincere milk of the word," and be always praying to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I have said this on

occasion of the passage of Scripture we have now been reading; intending, if it pleases God, to go on with St. Matthew's Gospel, in the order of the chapters; and may the God of all grace incline our hearts to go along with it, and make it saving work to us all. Do not make a famine of the word to yourselves; attend duly on the preaching and reading of the word; and do not content yourselves only with this, nor reckon that it comes to you with a blessing, till you read and pray over it at home; that so "the day may dawn, and the day-star, Jesus, arise in your hearts," to your present comfort and everlasting salvation.

PRAYER.

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles, we adore thy good providence for calling us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee. Do thou, who commandedst the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of thy glory in the person of Jesus Christ. Let thy word be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths, to guide us to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners; and let thy Spirit make it life and power in our hearts. It is thy heart of love opened to us for the knowledge of salvation, for pardon and peace, for strength and comfort in the Holy Ghost. It discovers to us our corruption and helplessness, that we may be in fear for ourselves, and gladly receive the remedy which thou hast provided for us. It calls us to repentance, that, by humbling ourselves before thee, we may be restored to thy favour. It reveals to us the Lord Jesus Christ born in our flesh, that we might be born again into his life and nature. It is the record of his acts and miracles, that we might go to him, as the Physician of our souls, and trust in his power for our own healing;

It calls us to him, all guilty and defiled as we are, for washing in his blood. It is the standing declaration of thy mercy to a perishing world, and the offer and conveyance of full and free redemption from our sin, misery, and danger. Blessed God, open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace, and our hearts to receive them. Now that the day-spring from on high hath visited us, and the light of heaven shines round about us, suffer us not to lie in darkness and the shadow of death. As thou hast manifested to us the riches of thy grace in Jesus Christ, manifest him to our souls in the fulness of his blessings; that finding him as the day-star in our hearts, we may fall down and worship him, present him with the choicest of our affections, take him for our Lord and King to reign over us, through him live unto thee in all holy obedience, and rejoice, all the days of our life, in the glorious hope of reconciliation and acceptance with thee for his sake, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION III.

St. Matthew, iii. 1.

In those days, — whilst Jesus dwelt at Nazareth, and before he entered upon his office. The Scripture is silent concerning his youth, except one passage related by St. Luke, to show it was a gracious one, chap. ii. What we are concerned in is, the conclusion of his life, as our Prophet, Teacher, and Sacrifice. That time was full of weighty business, and calls for our utmost attention.

— *Came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea.*—Every soul is that wilderness till he comes to it. Did you ever consider what he was sent into the world

for, and what need you have of him? Do not mistake, he comes preaching to you. Hear what he says:

Ver. 2. *Repent ye.*—Pray that the word may sound deep into your hearts; for if God is not working at the bottom of your repentance, it will be short of your case. We are naturally turned from God, dead in trespasses and sins, full of evil lustings, and stand bent against our true happiness. It is the great design of Scripture to teach us that this is our state, a state of corruption and condemnation, and that it must of all necessity be altered; to offer us a remedy, and prevail with us to accept it. . . .

—*For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*—God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; in which he receives us to a state of grace and sonship by Christ, and governs us by his Spirit. It is called "the kingdom of heaven," because it takes us out of our worldly life, state, and nature; is heaven begun in us; prepares us for heaven; and will be completed in heaven. This kingdom has been fully manifested to the world above seventeen hundred years, and yet the generality are as far from it as ever. God of his mercy grant that the hearing of it may take effect in us, by our present entrance into, and continuance in it; for in it we live, out of it we are in death. John's sermon is short; but it will find us work for all our lives to enter into the depth of it.

Ver. 3. *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,* &c.—The Lord Christ. And how did he prepare the way to him, but by calling men to repentance? thereby declaring the nature of his kingdom, and who were to be the subjects of it. You have only two things to think of; either to repent, or to be sure that you need not.

Ver. 4. *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair,* &c.—He appeared in the very garb of Elias,

2 Kings, i. 8, as well as in his spirit and power, that they might know him to be the Elijah spoken of by the prophet Malachi, iv. 5.

—*And his meat was locusts, and wild honey.*—What the desert afforded. Doubtless this was intended to be observed, as a proof of his austere, mortified life.

Ver. 5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea.* —Great numbers from all parts of it.

Ver. 6. *And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*—Baptism was an usual ceremony among the Jews; and they now received it from John as a token of their desire to be washed from the defilement of sin, and to enter upon a new course of life. So far all was well; but John will presently refer them to another baptism, without which they must come short of salvation. It is not enough to confess sin, without confessing, and believing in Christ, for remission and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 7. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Meaning, I suppose, that they did not well know what they came to him for, were still vipers in their hearts, and not inwardly warned, by any true knowledge of themselves, to flee from the wrath to come. Laying the emphasis on the word *you*, will give another, and something different, interpretation. As if he had said, This is strange indeed! To see you here, you learned doctors so full of yourselves! Who could have thought that you, of all men, would ever have come to my baptism! And then he admonishes them to make full proof of their repentance.

Ver. 8. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.* — Whoever you are, think of these fruits.

Ver. 9. *And think not to say within yourselves, we have*

Abraham to our Father.—They did think so, to the neglect of their own personal holiness; valuing themselves upon their descent from Abraham, as if they were secure in God's favour by it. Make the application for yourselves; trust not in your baptism, christian name, and profession, without a christian faith and life.

—*For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*—Men of other nations, though strangers from the covenants of promise, and how dead soever in themselves. You, if you will be God's children.

Ver. 10. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree.*—Now, if it be God's will, now hear, now pray that the axe may be laid to the root of all sin in you.

—*Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*—The sentence upon every unfruitful soul is here declared, and will certainly be put in execution. Therefore hear, and understand; judge, and be in fear for yourselves; come to Christ, and learn of him how to bring forth good fruit.

Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.*—And that was all he could do: he could not make that repentance available to salvation; he preached it as the way to Christ.

—*But he that cometh after me is mightier than I.*—To him therefore we must go, who alone is mighty to save, to give effect to all ordinances, and to the preaching of all his ministers.

—*Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.*—O Jesus, we are none of us worthy to be thy servants, in the meanest offices: but thou sendest to man by man, and canst perfect praise out of the mouths of babes.

—*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*—Not with water only, washing from the guilt of sin;

but with the Holy Ghost, revealing Christ as the Lord our righteousness; and also as with fire, cleansing the soul, consuming its dross, and renewing it to the image of God in holiness. This was remarkably fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, is always fulfilling in the world, and must be fulfilled in every one of us.

It may not be improper here to observe the method of the New Testament. It opens with John Baptist, the preacher of repentance: John Baptist leads us to Christ; and Christ, having proved himself to be the Son of God, and fulfilled all righteousness, sends down the Holy Ghost to reveal the doctrine of the kingdom to his apostles. This blessed Spirit now speaks by them to us in the word, and acts in Christ's stead, to work faith in him, and purify our hearts. There is no occasion therefore to derogate, as some do, from the Acts and Epistles of the apostles, as if it was a lessening of Christ's teaching and authority, to put any other upon a level with it. The truth is, the whole glad tidings of Gospel grace were not, and could not, be fully opened till after his death. And therefore we must look for the doctrine of salvation by faith in a crucified Saviour, more especially in the preaching and writings of his apostles. He never said so plainly as St. Peter did, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And why? Because the time for it was not then come.

Ver. 12. *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor*, &c.—John speaks of Christ's office from the beginning to the end of it, as setting up his kingdom in the world, ruling in it by his Spirit, and at last separating the bad from the good, and casting the unworthy out of it into fire unquenchable.

LECTURE.

It is the great design of Scripture to reveal to us the mercy and love of God in Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, to show us our want of such a Saviour, and stir us up to seek after him. And when we read the Scripture carefully and conscientiously, to learn what our condition is as therein represented; to know as exactly as we can what we must do to be saved, to resign our understandings, our wills, our hearts to it; we have an assured, comfortable proof within ourselves of our sincerity with God; and may depend upon it, that the same Spirit which has wrought in us this care and diligence to know the mind and will of God, will be with us in every step of our progress, to carry on and complete the good work he has begun in us, and make us wise unto salvation. He will teach us in particular, that he himself is the opener of all Scripture, to one as well as another; and that as "no man can say," savingly, "that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost;" so every man, let his station and business in the world be what it will, may say it by the help which is afforded him, and in the power of that grace which alone enables any to receive Christ into their hearts by faith, and is freely offered to all. Surely, my brethren, there is comfort and encouragement in this, to such corrupt, weak creatures as we are, who, when we have got a sight of our work, are ready to lose all heart, and sit down in despair; I say, there is a loud call and great encouragement in this, especially to the unlearned, busy part of mankind, to think that God has not only in mercy given the Scripture to point us to Christ, but gives the Spirit with it, to lead us to him as it were by the hand; and that as sure as we read it for this end, we shall never be disappointed of our hope; but may conclude against all our fears, that we are in God's way of

happiness and salvation. On the other hand, neglect of Scripture is a certain sign of a graceless spirit; and you cannot possibly have one proof to give of the goodness of your state, or any true concern for your souls, so long as you wilfully shut your eyes against the light. I am often reminding you of the falsehood of those excuses you allege, and of the deceitfulness of your hearts in this matter. Ask yourselves but one question; did God put this light into your hands on purpose that you might see your way to heaven? Then it is sufficient for this purpose, pretend what you will; and if you still continue in darkness, it is because you refuse instruction from God, and have no desire to reap the benefit of it. You will observe that I am not putting you upon reading the Scripture only as a task, or barely to rid yourselves of what you may think a duty, but to get life from it; to consider it as God's heart of love opened to you; to receive instruction from it with the simplicity of little children; to be confirmed by it in all saving knowledge; in a word, to find Christ in it. Whenever you do this in truth and sincerity, it will come home to you with a blessing; you will praise God for his word, and be earnest with him in prayer to make it light and truth in your hearts.

My friends, let us come to the right conclusion with ourselves. I fear many of you are sadly ignorant of Scripture, and of the way of salvation therein revealed; but will you live and die thus, and still hope well of your condition? Will you think and call yourselves Christians without Christian knowledge, or any desire of it? Certainly, what God has told you for the life of your souls, you *may*, you *must* know. You can read the Scripture; you can come hither to hear it; you can ask yourselves questions concerning what you read and hear; you can beg of God to help you in the understanding of it, and

incline your wills to receive it. For instance, you have heard in the chapter which has now been read, that John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of Christ, by preaching of repentance. Then it is evident at once, that repentance is the way in which we come to Christ, and Christ to us; and you are farther told what repentance is, viz. laying the axe to the root of sin in the heart, and bringing forth suitable fruits. Now, if you are a serious reader of Scripture, you will of course ask the question, Must all repent? And the Spirit's answer in the heart will be, Yes, all; you yourself, whatever you are in your own opinion, or the esteem of the world, unless you can say truly that you have always kept, and do keep every one of God's commandments. This you will scarce affirm; it will certainly be found upon trial that you are a transgressor of them all, when rightly understood; and as Christ himself will teach you to understand them in his sermon on the mount. Well, but suppose we do repent, meaning by that turning from sin to God with a full purpose of obedience, is this all we have to do? May we stop here, thinking we have done enough to secure our pardon, and challenge favour at God's hands? No, sin is not so light a thing, nor so easily forgiven as you suppose; no repentance, works, or after-endeavours of your own, can wash out the foul stains of it. Take notice, therefore, that John Baptist is not Christ; he is only the first step in your Christian course, and he here sends you to one who is mightier than he, to Jesus, whose name and office it is to save his people from their sins, as you heard in the first chapter; and if you do not come under his baptism of the Holy Ghost, to receive him by a faith of the Spirit's working, for cleansing in his blood, and for power of the Spirit's giving to live unto him that died for you, you are ignorant of yourselves, ignorant of Scripture, ignorant of the will of God for your

salvation, and have all the guilt of your sins lying upon you. See, I say, and consider whether these two points, of repentance as the way to Christ, and Christ as the only Saviour, are not plainly held forth to us in the chapter I have been reading. Read it over again when you go home. Ask yourselves, as in the presence of God, whether you have a sincere desire to understand it; and if you can put this desire into a prayer to have it applied, my life for it there will soon be an end of your lazy, unbelieving complaints of want of time, learning, or the difficulties of Scripture. When you can taste the sweetness of it, and take it into your hearts, you will read and meditate upon it daily, with many thanksgivings to God for so precious a gift. You will consider every miracle of Christ you read of, as wrought, as it were, on your own behalf, to point him out to you as your only remedy, and bring you to him for the miracle of your own healing and conversion. For this end the Gospels were written, that, seeing the power of Christ, you might convert it to your own use, and trust in it as engaged for your recovery; of which I shall have frequent occasion to remind you in the course of our reading. The Lord make you sensible of your want of Christ; and then, when you hear of his healing all manner of diseases, and know that sin, the worst of all others, is your disease, you will be glad to put yourselves into his hands for a cure.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; as thou dost hereby show us our need of repentance, show us also our need of thy Spirit to enable us to repent; that in the sense of our danger and weakness, we may fly

to thee for help, who workest in us both to will and do of thy good pleasure. So work in us, that, hearing the call of thy word to repentance, we may enter without delay upon a serious consideration of our state; examine ourselves in thy presence by the rule of thy commandments; and be prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in our sons, as our only Saviour from the guilt that is upon us. Suffer us not to deceive ourselves by thinking that we are partakers of Christ, and entitled to his blessings, when we never came to him in the way of thy appointing, nor saw ourselves wretched and miserable, lost and undone, without him. Thy wrath is now revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and we know, by the clear light of Scripture, that sin is the greatest of all evils, provoking to the eyes of thy glory, the object of thy heavy displeasure, and will for ever separate every soul of man from thee, in whom it is found unrepented of, and unpurged by the blood of Christ. Work in our souls such an effectual, contrite sense of the accursed nature of sin, and of our own sinfulness, that we may abhor ourselves in thy sight, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Grant, O Lord, that our repentance may be a laying the axe to the root of the tree; and whenever we humble ourselves before thee in truth and sincerity, have mercy on us, and show us thy salvation. Turn our eyes to the Lamb of God, who only taketh away the sin of the world; that, receiving thy covenant of peace, and being grounded in the faith of thy love, we may walk with thee as obedient children; serve thee without fear; and evermore praise thee for thy mercy in Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION IV.

St. Matthew, iii. 15.

Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.—What? He who did no sin, knew no sin, to come to John's baptism of *repentance?* Was not this rather counterfeit humility, and a denial of the truth, than matter of righteousness? Yes, as considered in his own person, but not as taking upon himself the sins of the whole human nature. One thing farther must be remarked. If he thought it just and right to come to John's baptism, surely it must be dangerous presumption in others to despise his own.

Ver. 16. *Lo, the heavens were opened*—In the sight of John and all the people.

—*And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*—That is, John saw this. Compare John, i. 32. And by the heavens opening, and the Spirit descending, we see, as it were, heaven opened to us with all its blessings; and always standing open to receive all who are cleansed by Christ's baptism, that is, those on whom the Spirit descends, and must descend, as it did upon him; for he was our pattern in all things. Let not the *dove* be overlooked. If we have not the innocence and meekness signified by it, our baptism is void; the Holy Ghost is not in it.

Ver. 17. *And lo, a voice from heaven*—Different from the Spirit descending, and Jesus on whom he descended. This is such full proof of a distinction of persons in the Trinity, as cannot be shaken.

—*Saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*—Observe, the voice of attestation came not till after the Spirit's descent; and that not for Christ's sake, for in him the Father was always well pleased; but

for ours, to show what we must be, and who are the sons of God; that is to say, not for any thing we are, or do, in our very best estate, but in and through the beloved Son, into whom we are engrafted by faith, and in whom alone he is well pleased. "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." And blessed be God for the good hope he has given us of acceptance in the Beloved, and for sending down the Holy Ghost to establish us in this faith, and be the *dove* in us, as he was in Jesus.

LECTURE.

I AM endeavouring, by all the ways I can think of, to stir you up to a diligent study of Scripture, to open it to you, and assist you in the understanding of it, as God shall enable me. I would gladly persuade you of these two things: one is, That if you do not read and search the Scripture with great care and godly seriousness, to know, as exactly as you can, what you must do to be saved, you may be sure that all is wrong with you; whatever else you do, you cannot possibly have any true concern for your souls. The other is, That the Scripture is not so difficult as you pretend; but, in all great and necessary points, easy to be understood by all persons of ordinary capacity, or little learning, and would certainly be understood by all of you, if it concerned your bodies, or worldly estate, as it does your souls. I know that naturally we are blind to the doctrines it teaches, and averse to the duties which it enjoins; and there is the great difficulty. But, notwithstanding this, they are delivered in plain words; and the fault is entirely our own, if we do not receive and apply them to the knowledge of God in Christ, and the everlasting salvation of our souls. For instance,

In this chapter we are told, that John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of Christ, and that he did it by preaching repentance; telling us that he meant laying the axe to the root of the tree, or sin in the heart. Is not this plain?

But then repentance is to prepare us for Christ, and put us in the way to him: of itself it is not available to our salvation; it cannot procure the pardon of our sins; and therefore, in his preaching, he sends us to one who is mightier than he, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this also plain?

He tells us that the coming of Christ was to baptize us with the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to work faith in us, and to cleanse and purify us, as with fire; and that he will one day separate the good from the bad, and gather the wheat into his garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Are not these plain words?

Again: in that part of the chapter which has now been read, you have heard that Jesus came to John to be baptized of him; thereby consecrating and confirming the ordinance of baptism for ever, because otherwise he himself would not have fulfilled all righteousness. The meaning of which, I told you in the exposition, is, that he fulfilled all righteousness, not for himself, who did not want it, but in our stead, and for our sakes; God being always well pleased in him, and in him with us, as being made partakers of him, and members of his body by faith. The sense is deep, but the words are clear.

And lastly, here is a plain and full confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity, or three persons in the Godhead; the Son on earth, the Father bearing witness to him by a voice from heaven, and the Holy Ghost descending upon him in a bodily shape like a dove.

These, now, are the chief points of doctrine and

instruction to be gathered from this chapter, and which lie open to every person of common understanding, if you would but give the same attention to them as you would to any other writing in which you think yourselves nearly concerned. You may have no will or desire to receive them; you may turn a deaf ear to them; but you cannot say they are not plainly delivered, nor excuse yourselves on account of any difficulty in the sense of the words. But then I must also tell you, that the bare hearing and understanding them signifies but little, and will never make you wise unto salvation, unless you apply what you learn from Scripture to your own state, and endeavour to set it home upon your hearts. You must consider it as spoken to you one by one, as much as if there was not another person in the world, and it was written solely for your use and benefit, and contrived on purpose to suit your particular case. You must muse deeply upon it; you must ask yourselves questions concerning it; you must pray over it, from a full belief and persuasion that it is for the life of your souls. Do this, with dependence on the Spirit of God, and you will find a blessing. But if you do not read the Scripture, or not with this purpose, you are in the darkness of unbelief this day and hour; and vain are all your hopes from your baptism and Christian name, if you live and die in this state. Observe, therefore, what I say, and how you must get the sweetness and marrow of Scripture. John Baptist says, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven, or Christ with all his blessings, is at hand. If you are a conscientious reader of Scripture, you will say, Then every one who hopes for these blessings must repent; I must repent, and I am sure I have need of it. But does not John Baptist here send me to Christ, notwithstanding my repentance? Yes; and I learn plainly from hence, that neither repentance, nor any thing else I can

do for myself, will save me, without coming to Christ, as the Lamb of God who taketh, and who only can take, away the sin of the world. What, then, must bring me to faith in Christ, and help me to carry on the great work of cleansing my heart? I read, here, the Holy Ghost; and if I do not come under his baptism, and look for that gift at the hands of Christ, I am as sure as that I read the words, that I can neither believe in him, nor live worthy of him. He will come again in judgment, to purge his floor, to gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire; but what will he account me in that day, and how shall I appear before him, if he does not first purge the floor of my heart? He fulfilled all righteousness, and God is always well pleased in him; but what does it avail me to hear of this, if I may not have the benefit of it? And I know I may, if I follow the directions which are given me; if I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be accounted just before God, and saved everlastingly. I am here taught the doctrine of the blessed Trinity; but to what end do I know and believe this, if I do not take God for my Father, to bestow all blessings on me, to be feared and loved; if God the Son is not my Redeemer; if God the Holy Ghost does not sanctify me?

You see, then, how you must read, consider, and apply the Scripture, in order to reap the benefit of it, and how all the children of God do read it. You must stop to examine your hearts and lives by it; you must give up your wills to it; you must receive what it tells you of your state and nature, as evil, without disputing or gainsaying; you must be guided by it to your remedy; you must let it bring you to repentance, and by repentance to Christ; you must pray for all this, and never hope well of your condition, till you value the word of God as a singular and most inestimable gift, and search it, to

the end you may find Christ in it, and live as becomes his disciples.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we confess unto thee that we are helpless and miserable, lost and undone, without thy grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. He came to seek and to save us, to offer himself a sacrifice of atonement for our sins, and fulfil all righteousness, that we might be accounted just before thee. Grant, O Lord, that we may be found in him, thy beloved Son, in whom thou art always well pleased, and for whose sake thou receivest us sinful creatures to a covenant of peace and forgiveness. Let this thy adorable mercy be assuredly believed, and thankfully received by us. Let thy word, which brings us such glad tidings, be the delight of our souls; that, being established in the faith of the Gospel, we may hate and forsake the sins for which Christ died, commit ourselves to thee for the purification of our hearts, and serve thee with freedom of spirit, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Have mercy on us, and show us thy salvation. Inspire us with a holy resolution of securing our portion in thee through the Son of thy love; and bring us through thy kingdom of grace to thy kingdom of glory, for his sake, Jesus Christ the righteous, our blessed and all-sufficient Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION V.

St. Matthew, iv. 1.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.—He, who was to fulfil all righte-

ousness, must pass through all states, and undergo the severest trials. Trial is as necessary for us, the chosen means of God for our purification and establishment; and the same Spirit prepares us for it, and is then most with us, when we think we are most deserted. Here is also warning given us of an invisible and most dangerous enemy. Look well at this Scripture, that you may know the great benefit of all Scripture, and how we must be armed against his assaults. He is a master of his trade; and, if we may judge from his three several attempts upon our Saviour, both knows the weak side of our nature, and what sins will be most likely to undo us. You will observe that the devil's great aim was to draw him from his dependence upon and allegiance to God; for all other sins find an easy entrance, where the way is not guarded by these principles.

Ver. 2. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.*—The call of nature was strong, and the cunning adversary spied his advantage. Take notice, that you need not put yourselves in his power, let your straits be ever so great. Have an eye to your pattern.

Ver. 3. *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*—As if he had said, "Do this, or perish; for there is no bread to be had here in the wilderness without a miracle." The devil wished our Lord to forget by whose power he fasted forty days and forty nights.

Ver. 4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*—Bread cannot support us without *him*, and he can as well support us without *it*. Christ would not distrust his Father, who had brought him into this strait, but left the time and manner of his relief to *him*.

Ver. 6. *Cast thyself down, for it is written, &c.*—Casting himself down would have been making an un-

warrantable, presumptuous trial of the will of God to keep him unhurt, and therefore going beyond what is written.

Ver. 7. *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*—By doubting of his power and goodness, and putting him upon any unnecessary proof of them. So the Israelites frequently *tempted* God; and we have the same distrust and unbelief lurking in our hearts, when we do not rest satisfied with the evidences we already have of his fatherly care over us.

Ver. 8. *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.*—He could take him nowhere from himself. In every place he kept close to God.

Ver. 9. *All these things will I give thee.*—This *all* was *but* the world; in Christ's eye, nothing. Observe whether a *very little* of the world is not a dead weight upon thy soul.

Ver. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan.*—Now he calls him by his name, the grand *Adversary*, the *Hater* of God and man. It was a horrid provocation, and required a stout answer.

—*For it is written*—Not only in the book, but the heart. There *he* had it written, and thence *we* must fetch it, to be our help in time of need.

—*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*—As thy only and all-sufficient good, with all thy heart, mind, and soul, with all thy powers and affections, and with the utmost strength of them all. If the temptation is to serve our lusts, learn of Christ to say, Get thee hence, Satan; for he gains his ends, and draws us from the service of God as effectually by them, as if we fell down and worshipped him.

Ver. 11. *Then the devil leaveth him.*—The Scripture drove him away. You know how to be safe. We are

upon a right ground, when *it is written* is a full answer to all temptations, and all objections.

—*And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*—God now sent him a supply for his hunger, and there was comfort in it.

Ver. 12. *Now when John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee*—From the wilderness of Judea, where he had been tempted. John's imprisonment was so far from discouraging him, that it was the signal for his entering upon action.

Ver. 13. *And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum*—A place of great resort, and a populous part of the country. But there was a further reason for it, viz. to show us how a prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled.

Ver. 16. *The people which sat in darkness, saw great light*, &c.—Believe it against the world, and against all the suggestions of your own hearts. Christ is a great light, and without it we are in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Depend upon it, we have no light of our own to guide us into the knowledge and love of God, his pardon and peace here, or glory hereafter. And if this is not darkness, what is? Away with your vain excuses. Search the Scriptures, with prayer for a blessing. Christ's light is sweet now, wanted by all, and freely offered to all; but it will be terrible to your souls, if you never see it till you come to be judged by it.

Ver. 17. *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say*,—Jesus! the great Preacher from heaven! He could not be mistaken in what he says. Be all attention. Begin with him, and follow him throughout this Gospel. And may he be with us in the grace and power of his Spirit!

—*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*—So Christ's forerunner, John Baptist, said; so Christ himself says; and so all his faithful ministers must, and will say, to the world's end. The kingdom of heaven, the grace and pardon of it, as they are not offered, so they cannot be welcome to any but those who are so convinced of the deadly nature of all sin, and of the reality of their own, as to long for deliverance from it. Have you no desire of Christ and his blessings, from a sense of your undone state? Talk no more of your baptism and Christian name, your good deeds, or shining accomplishments; the kingdom of heaven is not yet come to *you.*

Ver. 19. *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*—If they followed him, not else. He can make me so to you. The very words, if it pleases God, may catch you. Think for yourselves; think what they imply: if you are not caught in the net of the Gospel, you perish. Are you in it? Doubtless many of you think so. But ask yourselves, why you think so, and whether you have been brought into it with the free consent of your wills? And this, with the help of God, may bring on a discovery of your state.

Ver. 20. *And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.*—And so will I, says the awakened man, though with the loss of all; and I pray God stir me up to it effectually.

Ver. 23. *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues.*—What he taught was not confined to that time and place. Blessed be God, we have it here before us, and he is now present with us in his word and the power of his Spirit.

—*And preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.*—The way and means of being received into God's kingdom of grace here, and heaven hereafter. O! let Christ preach you into it. God forbid that death should find you out

of it. You know you must repent, upon the peril of your souls. But that is not the *Gospel*, or *glad tidings* of the kingdom. If you should ask, What then? I answer, God's peace to perishing sinners, and love to us in Christ Jesus.

—*And healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.*—Is not this the very person we all want? You will hear in this Gospel of many of his miraculous cures: but to what end, if they do not convince you of his power and will to heal *you*, and bring you to him for help in your own case? Be not therefore deceived. You are by nature sick of a deadly distemper. Sin is a worse plague than any that can befal your bodies; and the removal of that was the great business for which he came into the world.

Ver. 24. *And his fame went throughout all Syria.*—It is gone out into all lands, and by the great mercy of God to us come hither also. You are often hearing of the fame of the all-healing, all-saving Jesus; to your unspeakable benefit, if you would only come to him as the Physician of your souls.

—*And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments.*—So, if he was now here, there would be great striving who should come to him first with their bodily diseases. But his chief concern was not for the bodies of men; he had a higher aim in all he did, viz. to cure them and us of an evil heart and evil nature; which is a sickness we all have, and the worst we can have, the cause of all our other sicknesses, and of all the unhappiness that is in the world; and if Christ does not relieve us from it, it will never have an end.

—*And those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them all.*—Before, it was said, he healed *all manner* of sickness, and *all manner* of disease; and now St.

Matthew makes particular mention of some which were the most incurable by human means. Fear not; *thine* is not above his skill, though thou wilt be apt to think so in the distress of thy soul.

Ver. 25. *And there followed him great multitudes.*—Whatever they followed him for, he knew what they wanted, as you will find in the three next chapters. Let us beseech God that we may follow him in his heavenly instructions, with earnest attention, a deep sense of our own blindness, and full submission to his authority.

LECTURE.

My friends, I fear the history of our Lord goes on faster than we follow it. We have heard of his being the Son of David, and the seed promised to Abraham, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed; of his conception by the Holy Ghost, and birth of a virgin; of salvation by the name Jesus, and of his being Immanuel, God with us; of the wise men coming from a far country, by the miraculous guidance of a star, to worship him; and of other circumstances, which, according to prophecy, attended his birth; of the preparation for his kingdom by the ministry of John Baptist; and of his being baptized himself, not only to authorize the ordinance, but to undertake, what he alone could, and needed not to do but for our sakes, *to fulfil all righteousness.* Let us endeavour to keep pace with Scripture.

In this chapter the great enemy of our souls is discovered to us, with the manner in which he usually tempts us, by spying his advantage, and suiting himself to the particular circumstances of want or distress we may be in. And we are also instructed how to withstand his assaults, and defeat all his designs against us. Christ,

our example, resisted and overcame him with his knowledge of Scripture, and by opposing the command and will of God to every temptation. So may we, if we are well grounded in the belief of Scripture, have it ready upon all occasions, and resolve to be governed by it. Let me, therefore, once more earnestly exhort you to the study of God's word, to rejoice in the light of it, and to depend upon it, in conjunction with the Spirit, who always accompanies the serious desire of being guided by it, as your best security against the wiles of your subtle adversary, the devil, and the various trials you will be sure to meet with in your Christian warfare.

St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. That "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Every one, therefore, who aspires to the high and holy title of man of God, every one who would please God, and be an heir of salvation, takes care above all things to be well furnished with the word of God, both in his head and heart. He knows the Scripture to be his guide to heaven, given by inspiration of God for that purpose; and that neglect and ignorance of it is like shutting himself up in a dark room, or putting out his eyes, when the sun shines around him. Whether you ever take that blessed book into your hands or not, you know best. Perhaps, you may read a little of it now and then, supposing it to be a duty, and to quiet conscience. But what would you do, if it taught you an infallible way to thrive and grow rich in the world? Would you not read it carefully to learn that method? And would you think the bare reading of it enough? Would you not also think it necessary to understand the directions it gave you, and reduce them to practice? It is easy to make the application. If you do not read the

Scripture, it is evident at once that you are in the darkness of unbelief, and have no manner of concern about your souls. But if you do read it, though it were daily, yet what better are you if you do it not to the end for which it was given, to be instructed, and corrected, and made wise by it unto salvation? Christ is the sum and substance of all Scripture. It was written, and put into our hands, as a light from heaven, to guide us to him, and by him to God. Him, therefore, we must look for in it, as the way, the truth, and the life; him we must find in it, as the Physician of our souls, knowing that we are sick of a deadly distemper, which none but he can cure; his blood must be applied to our consciences for healing; his directions we must follow; his words we must treasure up in our hearts and memories, and make them the subject of our daily prayers. Do not say you cannot do this; I have observed to you more than once, that you would, if it was for your bodies. If you were blind, or lame, or sick, and knew that he stood over you, you would tell him of your disease, and say, Lord, help me; and if he put you in a way of recovery, you would be sure to follow his advice.

In the former part of this chapter, you heard how Christ resisted the devil, and baffled all his temptations, by saying to him, thus and thus it is written. If you are in earnest with God and your soul, you will say upon hearing this, how can I follow a better example, and where shall I find a more successful method to keep off sin? Nay, you will both say and do more: You will say, then, As I am an ignorant creature, I must study and search the Scripture, to be perfect in the knowledge of God's will; and as I am a weak creature, I must also keep close to God in prayer, to make what I learn from thence effectual to my support. You have also heard to day, that when Jesus entered upon his ministry, he began his preaching

with saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." If you have any desire to turn what you hear to your own benefit, you can; you will say, This is a short sermon, and easily remembered; but then I must also apply it, I must enter into the depth of it, I must take it into my heart; I must repent, for else the kingdom of heaven, or Christ, by whom alone we enter into, and continue in it, will never come to me.

When you read how he called Peter and Andrew, James and John, and accompanied his word with such power, that immediately they left their occupation, and followed him; you can say, though he does not now call me to leave my farm, trade, or labour, yet he does call me to be his disciple in truth and sincerity; he calls me to the way of salvation by him, and has as powerful a word for me, if I will but hear it. I read how he went about teaching, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, or the glad tidings of grace, mercy, and peace from God to undone sinners, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. Blessed be God, may every one say, that he is still teaching in his word, and has now been preaching to me! Blessed be God that he has healing for me, for my soul; that my disease, desperate as it is, is not beyond his skill; and that every miracle he wrought is a certain pledge of his power and will to help me, if I do but come to him in faith and longing for his salvation! Dearly beloved, if ever it pleases God to accompany my endeavours among you with a blessing, you will know the truth of what I am saying. You will think yourselves happier for having a Bible in your houses, than if it was your title to a large estate. You will be enabled to see how it suits your case as lost sinners, to open your hearts to it, and rejoice in the mercy of it. And till you do this, "as new-born babes desiring the sincere, pure milk of the word, that you

may grow thereby," to find Christ in it, to know him as your only Saviour reconciling you to God by the sacrifice of his death, to follow him in the way of his holy commandments, to give yourselves up to the guidance of his Spirit, to be made partakers of his blessings.—I say, till you do this, if it was the last word I shall ever speak in this place, you must not hope well of your condition.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who hast given us thy word to enlighten our souls, to rule our consciences, and direct us in our actions, give us grace to receive it with all readiness of mind, and to make it the solemn purpose of our lives to be governed by it. Thou, O Jesus, hast taught us the use of it in all our dangers and temptations. Thou didst arm thyself with it in thy conflict with the devil, and wast proof against all his assaults by thy perfect knowledge of the will of God, and resolute conformity to it. Let thy example be ever before our eyes; that whatever difficulties we have to struggle with, whatever straits we are brought into, we may stand ready in the power of the word to resist the enemy of our souls, and employ it as our sure defence against the sins we are by nature or custom inclined to, and by which we are most liable to fall. Grant, O Lord, that we may study and treasure it up in our hearts to this end; and do thou bring it seasonably to our minds in every time of need, and make it effectual to our support. Enlighten, strengthen, help us, that we may perfectly know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, who didst send thy only begotten Son to preach repentance, to set up thy kingdom of grace in the world, and open a way for us by his death into thy ever-

lasting kingdom of glory; grant, we beseech thee, that we may receive him with all humility and thankfulness as our Saviour and mighty Deliverer, rejoice in his salvation, and be made partakers of all his blessings. Let thy Spirit convince us that we are sick of a deadly distemper, and perishing in sin; that we may come to him as the physician of our souls, and follow him in his heavenly instructions with a deep sense of our blindness, and full submission to his authority. His fame is gone out into all lands, and his words into the ends of the earth. What he preached is written for our learning, and of thy great mercy we have been baptized into the name and power of the all-healing, all-saving Jesus. Suffer us not to continue in darkness now that the light of heaven shines round about us. Awaken us out of the dead sleep of a sinful, careless, or worldly life. Open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace. Cause the word of thy grace to sound deep into our hearts, that we may repent and believe the Gospel; and, knowing that we are heirs of salvation, give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION VI.

St. Matthew, v. 1.

And seeing the multitudes—Destitute of knowledge and perishing in sin. This was a moving sight to him, who came from heaven to die for them.

—*And when he was set.*—He knew his authority, and would not be wanting to it.

—*His disciples came unto him.*—Not the twelve, for

they were not yet chosen; if some of the company were more especially entitled to that appellation, he spoke to them for all, in the hearing of all.

Ver. 2. *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.*—Think who it is that is now going to open his mouth, and what a loss it would have been to the world, if what he then taught had not been left upon record. Who cannot commit the several particulars of this sermon to memory, meditate upon them, and pray over them?

Ver. 3. *Blessed.*—The Christian has his eye and heart upon Christ's blessedness, knowing assuredly, that he could not possibly be mistaken in it.

Note. There is a dreadful reverse implied in all these blessings. If we neither have them, nor are following after them, let us be what we will in other respects, we are, and must for ever be, accursed.

—*Are the poor in spirit.*—Those who are deeply conscious of their sin, guilt, and helplessness, and have a constant, abiding sense of their poverty and dependence; who, knowing their desert, think any condition of life too good for them, and neither court riches nor distinction.

—*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*—They are fitted to enter into it, will enter into it, and receive all its heavenly, self-denying doctrines; and having chosen God's kingdom of grace here, shall be admitted into his kingdom of glory in heaven.

Ver. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn*—For sin, past and present; for the prevalence of it in the world, and the remainder of it in themselves; for the miseries it brings upon men here and hereafter; feeling and suffering for all mankind.

—*For they shall be comforted*—In time or eternity.

Ver. 5. *Blessed are the meek*—The patient toward God and man.

—*For they shall inherit the earth.*—If the words should

be supposed primarily to respect their inheritance in the new earth, or paradise restored, yet they are certainly true in this sense also, that the meek have more enjoyment of themselves, and pass more quietly and happily through the world, whatever is their lot in it, than other men. What would the greatest affluence signify to a man's happiness, if he had it with this condition, to receive one or more wounds with a sword every day of his life? Discontent and impatience, pride and passion, are that sword.

Ver. 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.*—God's, by faith; their own, by love.

—*For they shall be filled*—With such a measure of what they hunger and thirst after, as will be satisfying: not fully here; for these beatitudes have their completion in heaven.

Ver. 7. *Blessed are the merciful*—Who give, and forgive; pity all, bear with all, and do good to all in love.

—*For they shall obtain mercy.*—And they all want it, notwithstanding this, and other good qualities.

Ver. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart.*—Who are purely and singly devoted to God, having their hearts shut against all such creature-love as would defile them, or alienate them from him.

—*For they shall see God.*—His glorious excellence, which they loved in their hearts. Consider whether any shall see him but the pure in heart.

Ver. 9. *Blessed are the peace-makers.*—Who, being at peace with God, are at peace with all mankind; love peace, study peace, buy peace.

—*For they shall be called the children of God.*—That is, actually be his children, and so reputed by God, the great Peace-maker, in his Son, and whose nature is universal good-will.

Ver. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for*

righteousness' sake.—Who know it, love it, and are so well established in it, that they can bear to be persecuted for it. It may be inferred from hence, that the righteousness which exposes to persecution, is something different from that which passes for religion in the common opinion of the world, viz. a decent, civil behaviour, attended with beneficent actions, and the profession of religion to a certain degree: for that never is persecuted; but, on the contrary, entitles those who are possessed of it to the general esteem. The true, evangelical righteousness, opposing itself not only to the sinful practices, but vain customs, insnaring pleasures, and mistaken pursuits of the world, will be sure to draw the enmity of the world upon it.

—*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*—A superabundant recompense for all they can suffer.

Ver. 11. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,* &c.

Ver. 12. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,* &c.—The general obloquy and hatred is a grievous trial, as well as persecution unto death. Christ knew this, and therefore repeats his encouragement.

LECTURE.

My brethren, if you attended to the portion of Scripture which has now been read and opened to you, and have any knowledge of your own hearts, you will be ready to say, Here is hard work. But nevertheless it is Christian work, Christ's teaching, and the way of blessedness. The question, therefore, you should ask yourselves, is this: Could Christ be mistaken in what he said? Or do we know better than he how we are to be blessed? Perhaps you never sat down once in your whole lives to consider what that way is, nor what is contained

in Christ's sermon on the mount; though it is so short, that you might read it over several times, and commit a great part of it to memory, in one day. But is this he whom you call your Saviour and Master? Will you suffer him to teach you nothing, do nothing for you? Have you been hearing what he says only to think no more of it, and put it from you with saying it is hard? Do you mean by this that you need not trouble yourselves about it? Then Christ opened his mouth to little purpose, and gave himself a needless trouble, in teaching us what we may learn of him or not, just as we please. But consider what you say. Christ's teaching is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit:" Do you mean that you need not be poor in spirit, but may continue proud and unhumbled all your days? He says, "Blessed are they that mourn:" Do you scorn this advice, and resolve never to mourn so long as you can help it, or to have one serious, troubled thought about your sin? He says, "Blessed are the meek:" Is this to be no check upon wrath and anger, nor to have any force in cooling our resentment? "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the peace-makers; blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" *blessed,* he says, over and over again, and would have the word taken notice of. Is there no necessity for our thinking of these things, nor how to get ourselves possessed of these tempers, nor that we are in the want of them? If we have no feeling of it in ourselves, we have no right to nor share in Christ's comforts; we can have no free enjoyment of ourselves, nor of any thing we have upon earth; we are empty of all good; and, living and dying thus, we shall obtain no mercy, nor see God, nor be called his children, nor have our reward in heaven; we have no root of blessedness in us here, nor promise of it hereafter; in a word, we are

accursed, and as accursed as sin can make us: for Christ means nothing less than he says; and when he pronounces us blessed in the graces and tempers here mentioned, he gives us plainly to understand, that in the want of them we are and shall be unhappy and accursed.

I am persuaded, too, that something more is here intended, and that Christ has been holding up a glass to us to see ourselves in, and to put us upon considering what we are by nature, viz. the reverse of all this. He was no ordinary teacher, and did not spend words to no purpose; and therefore we may well suppose, that he is here leading us to the root of evil which he knows to be in man, consulting our wants, and suiting his instructions to our condition. What did you think, what did your hearts tell you, when you heard those words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit?" That is, those who, being poor towards God, poor in goodness, know they are so, think themselves unworthy of the least of God's mercies, and any condition of life too good for them. Are you this man or woman? Or are you just the reverse, full of self-conceit, so that you neither tell yourself of your condition in sin, nor care to hear it from others, and are sure to bear the man a grudge who puts you in mind of it?

And so with respect to all the beatitudes, as they are called, that is, ways and means of blessedness, eight in number, do you not perceive that Christ meets with something in your very heart and soul which is contrary to some or all of them; and, as I said, shows you that there is a root of evil in the nature of man, which stands bent against its own happiness? For I am very confident that he was not mistaken, how we are to be blessed and happy, in time and eternity; but is here making good his character of the Saviour, by delivering us from the darkness and ignorance which is upon our minds, and

endeavouring to take away the curse which cleaves to us in our natural state of corruption. What, then, is it you have to do? Lay yourselves to this rule. Think of Christ's beatitudes, and every one of them, day by day, that you may see your sin in the want not only of all, but any one of these happy tempers, and how it comes to pass that you are restless, vain creatures, and no more at ease in your souls, than you could be in your bodies with a broken limb. And when you know this, and know it to be your sin, go directly to Christ with it for pardon and washing in his blood: for he shows us what we are, to the end that, first, we may come to him, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" and, then, that we may put ourselves into his hands, to be taught by him the way of present and everlasting blessedness. And he will be a whole Saviour, or none. You must not think either that you can make your peace with God without him, or keep God's peace without living by his law. Let his love in dying for you rule in your hearts, and then you will gladly learn of him how you ought to walk and to please God; to be as blessed as you can be upon earth, by your growth in these holy tempers, and prepared for the blessedness of his kingdom in heaven. I shall now gather up what has been said in the words of a prayer; and may the Lord enable you to discern whether you can pray poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting after Christ and his blessings!

PRAYER.

O blessed Jesus, who wast sent of God to be the Saviour of mankind, by delivering us from the condemnation of sin, from the darkness and ignorance we are in by nature, and from all our spiritual enemies; assist us with thy grace to receive the rules of holy living which thou hast delivered to us, and teach with authority

in our souls. As thou camest to us with the fulness of blessings in thy hands, with love in thy heart, healing in thy blood, and the light of truth in thy words; grant unto us, we beseech thee, that, in the sense and feeling of our poverty, we may come to thee, hungering and thirsting both for that righteousness which thou art, and that which thou workest in all who receive the kingdom of God as little children, and rejoice to learn of thee the way of present and everlasting blessedness. Make us to know, that of ourselves we are blind and ignorant, and can only be recovered from the misery of our condition by submitting to thy heavenly doctrine and instructions. Thou knowest that by nature we are proud and unhumbled, and, though perishing in sin, do not mourn for it, nor desire thy comforts; that we do not choose meekness for our portion in the earth, nor to be filled with righteousness; nor seek to obtain mercy, to see God, to be called his children, and have our reward in heaven, in the exercise of mercifulness, purity of heart, love of peace, and readiness to suffer for thy sake. Oh! send down a mighty power of thy Spirit to enlighten our dark minds, to bend our stubborn wills, to quicken our dead hearts, and to convince us of our sin; that, coming to thee for pardon and reconciliation with God, and being grounded in the faith of thy love, we may from henceforth live unto thee, gladly receive a law at thy mouth, be blessed upon earth in the love and practice of thy holy commandments, and made partakers of the blessedness of thy faithful servants in heaven; where thou sittest at the right hand of God, to succour all those who rejoice in thy salvation, and come unto God by thee, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION VII.

St. Matthew, v. 13.

Ye are the salt of the earth.—All true Christians, especially faithful ministers. How desirable and excellent to be that to men, without which they must corrupt and putrify!

—*But if the salt have lost its savour*—It is not here asserted, that salt can lose its quality, but only that those who have the nature of it, and are compared to it, may; and, when they do, are in a more dangerous condition than others.

—*It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.*—As dirt. O teacher! never lose sight of this image.

Ver. 14. *Ye are the light of the world.*—Ordained to shine for the general good; but still, as the sun does, without merit.

—*A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*—And those *should* not, who have light given them. God no more intends they should hide it, than men light a candle only to cover it up again.

Ver. 16. *Let your light so shine before men*—Improve it, keep it always burning, and then be not afraid to let it appear. But mark, to what end; not to take pride in it, but

—*That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*—That seeing the beauty of goodness, and the power of God in *you*, they may glorify him by their own conversion. Make a duty of speaking and acting for the good of men, to the glory of God.

Ver. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or*

the prophets.—By a partial, lame interpretation of them, as the Scribes and Pharisees do. Mark, therefore, that not taking the law in its whole comprehension and extent, is in effect destroying it. The perfection of our hearts consists most in those points we think little of, and most easily overlook. What a scene of new, unthought-of guilt is opened to us in what follows!

—*I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*—In my own person; to show you how the law is fulfilled, and then to put you in a way of doing it; thus establishing it, and securing obedience to the whole and every part of it.

Ver. 18. *Till all be fulfilled.*—Surely he means by himself, and in his own person. For who else ever fulfilled every tittle of the law? Nevertheless, the sacredness, and everlasting, indispensable obligation of it, is here asserted in the strongest terms; and if this is not the mark we are aiming at, we cannot be his disciples, nor have any benefit of his fulfilling it for us.

Ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so.*—Christ does not hereby authorize us to suppose any of the commandments to be little. But the meaning is, any thing contained under, or included in, them, though seemingly small to us, as anger, scornful speaking, and reviling, in the sin of murder.

—*Shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*—As little in it, as he accounts of *them;* that is, nothing: they shall be excluded. Observe the danger of vacating God's commands, in any respect, in any one instance.

—*But whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*—The most perfect teaching without doing, will signify nothing to our own reward, whatever effect it may have upon others. In reality, all teaching without doing, is not only very imperfect, but for

the most part defeats itself, and is a fatal injury to the truth.

Ver. 20. *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*—What they taught, and therefore we may be sure did not practise better.

Ver. 21. *Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time.*—Rather, *to* them, viz. in the law.

—*Thou shalt not kill.*—You are sure you never did, and that God can have nothing to lay to your charge in this respect. But are you sure you understand the command as *he* intends you should? Not only as forbidding murder, but commanding love, and that freedom from hatred and malice, which would keep you at the greatest distance from it. Be upon your guard; for Christ is at hand with his light; and, if he finds this sin in your hearts, you must not think to clear yourselves of it; you have nothing to do but to think of your danger.

Ver. 22. *But I say unto you*—With divine authority, and infallible certainty. Now, therefore, as you love your souls, hear and understand, that you may take a right measure of your duty, and thereby of yourselves. Great force in that little word *I* to a true disciple.

—*That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause.*—That is, (if the words, *without a cause*, are to be retained) except the case require some severity of behaviour, or expression; but still with real kindness, in pity to him, for reasons respecting his good, and so that the anger may be against the fault, and not the man. Observe the word *brother*. So God teaches thee to call every one. Think with what tenderness and love thou oughtest, and perhaps wouldest behave to him, if he was really such.

—*Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca.*—A term of reproach and contempt, well understood by Christ's hearers.

— *But whosoever shall say, thou fool* — With still greater bitterness and malevolence, thou greatest of all fools, the Scripture fool, thou vile, wicked fellow. But does not Christ himself call the Scribes and Pharisees fools? Yes; but, with divine compassion, to rouse them to a consideration of their state. The sin is in the anger, the scorn, the pride of heart, in one sinner towards another.

— *Shall be in danger of the judgment — of the council — of hell fire.* — It may be an allusion to three different kinds of judicature, or punishment, among the Jews. But whether it is or not, the meaning is plain: every one of these, though not every one equally, proceeds from an evil root of hatred, is a breach of that charity we owe to one another, and will bring us under condemnation.

And now who will plead to the sixth commandment, not guilty? Take notice again, if you would not be deceived, that it is in the inward root, the thought of the heart, that is our own bane, and makes us guilty before God. He does not want to hear us speak, to know what we are.

Ver. 23. *And there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee.*—Whether he knows it, or not. God knows it for him.

Ver. 24. *Leave there thy gift.*—Nothing will be accepted from thee in this disposition.

Ver. 25. *Agree with thine adversary* — Thy brother; and God, on his behalf.

— *Quickly*, &c. — The loss of an hour may be the loss of thy soul.

Ver. 26. *Till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* — If we could pay the first, we might have some hope of paying the last. He, who only could, paid all for us.

LECTURE.

Who is it that is now teaching? Whose words have we been hearing? Whose sermon is this? Can you say that you have received the Lord Jesus Christ for your Teacher and Master, and are come to this resolution with yourselves once for all, that you will submit your souls to his instruction, to the whole and every part of it, without disputing, with thankfulness; knowing it to be the light which he has brought you from heaven, and that, if ever you hope to come there, you must be careful to follow it? Ask yourselves the question, Whether you desire and think it necessary to learn of him? Doubtless, you will say you do: but how do you make it appear, how do you prove it to yourselves? Do you go, as it were, to his school day by day, like little children, to be taught by him? You cannot be at a loss to know what I mean. Christ is not here in person to teach us by word of mouth; but you know he has left his heavenly doctrine and instructions for the benefit of all succeeding ages. He still speaks to us in the Scripture: do you read it? If you do not, here is full undeniable proof against you to your own heart and conscience, that you are not his disciples. Nor is it sufficient to read, unless you also endeavour to understand it, and enter into the design of it, as God shall enable you. Christ, you see, does not trifle with us in his teaching, and woe be to us if we trifle with him! He has plainly marked out for us the way that we should walk in, and declared his will to us, and sealed it in his blood; and if we refuse it, or make light of it, or do not see that the dearest interest of our souls is concerned in it, knowing, believing, and preaching what he has delivered to us, we must be blind indeed to flatter ourselves that we belong to him, or that we are in the way

of his salvation. Let us now consider what he has taught us to-day.

1. He says, "'Ye are the salt of the earth." He spake it to his disciples; not to the twelve apostles, properly so called, for they were not yet chosen; but to all his followers, who were then present to learn of him. And his meaning is, that all who are his disciples must, and will be, salt; and teachers and ministers more especially, yet all others, more or less, some in a higher, some in a lower degree. It is the property of salt to keep what it is applied to from corrupting; and Christ's salt, if we have it in ourselves, his doctrine with the power of his Spirit in it, will both keep us uncorrupt, and be salt in our hands to season others withal. He says, "Ye are the light of the world," by light from him; and when you have it, and know how precious it is, and what it has done for you, you must not hide it, but let it shine out in your conversation and example, for the benefit of all about you. He says, ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world; meaning, as I told you, that Christians must be so. Now what do you say to this in your very heart? Are you this salt? Are you this light? Think, and speak the truth: but remember withal, that if you have not the light of Christ, you are in the darkness of hell; if you are not salt, seasoned with his doctrine and spirit, you are dirt, and, as such, good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot.

2. If you would not mistake in judging how the case stands with you in respect of obedience, nor be carried away with the deceitfulness of your hearts, you must suffer Christ to teach you the sacred obligation and fulness of the law of God. You must not overlook any part of it, as thinking it little, or look only at the outside of it, to clear yourselves because you are not guilty of the gross, open

violation of it; but take it as it lies before you in its whole length and breadth, literal and spiritual meaning, and as he is here instructing you to understand it. He fulfilled it perfectly in his own person, and in our nature, because it must be so fulfilled before we could be saved; and there was a necessity for his dying for us, because we do not perfectly fulfil it, and by reason of our transgression of it are bound over to eternal death; which shows us, in the strongest light, how great and honourable the law is in the eyes of God, and that, if we do not take it for the rule of our hearts and lives, and endeavour, with the utmost sincerity of intention, to bring ourselves up to it, we "shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven," that is, we shall never enter into it. And we cannot pretend that we have any intention to obey it in sincerity, and in the truth of an upright conscience, if we diminish one jot or one tittle from it, as Christ has expounded it to us.

3. Did you take notice of his explanation of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?" You are sure you do not. Now your saying this would do very well, and you need look no farther, if you were to be your own judge. But how has Christ decided the point? Why, he tells us plainly, that if we have any malice, hatred, ill-will, or scornful anger against our brother, any soul of man, we are guilty of the breach of this commandment; that so long as we are in this disposition, God will accept nothing at our hands, no worship, no service that we can pay him; and that, if we are not reconciled to, and at peace with, all the world, not outwardly only, but in heart and soul, we shall be cast into the prison, from whence there is no deliverance: he says, "not till we have paid the uttermost farthing;" that is, never, for we cannot pay one. Lord Jesus! if thy teaching is strict, it is the truth, and thou knowest it to be good for us; and if we desire to learn of

thee, thou wilt make it the light of life to us. Work in us this desire, and teach us to pray for the will and the deed.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who didst send thy blessed Son to die for our sins, and to teach us to be happy, turn our eyes to him as the Saviour and light of the world. Enlighten our souls with saving knowledge, and warm our hearts with the love of thy truth, that, being established in the faith of thy mercy in Jesus Christ, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; and then let our light so shine before men, that beholding the power of thy grace in us, they may desire and trust in it for themselves, and glorify thee by their conversion. Thy commands are pure; thy law is holy, and just, and good; thou wouldest have it magnified and made honourable in the sight of men and angels, by being perfectly fulfilled in the person of Christ; it was thy great mercy to deliver him up as a sacrifice of atonement for our transgressions of it, and make us partakers of his righteousness; it is thy will that we should receive it in the love thereof, and live to thee as our Lord and Governor, in the truth and sincerity of a pure obedience. Suffer us not, O Lord, to diminish from it by the deceitfulness and corruption of our hearts. Blessed is thy will, and thou knowest that we are only miserable by transgressing it, and can never be happy but in conforming ourselves to it. Thou hast declared to us the law of heaven, as the way we should walk in, and great cause have we to bless thee for the instruction of thy holy word. Enable us to follow it steadfastly as our guide to the glory which thou hast prepared for us, that we may rejoice for ever in heaven, with all those who faithfully improve the doctrine of the great Teacher, Jesus; for whose sake deliver us, we beseech thee, from all evil,

and turn our hearts to all mankind in love, that we may be found of thee in peace, as the disciples and servants of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION VIII.

St. Matthew, v. 28.

But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her—It is hard to know when we come within the verge of this prohibition; and, therefore, keep a strict watch in the case, and be safe by inward purity.

—*Hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*—Observe, again and again, what Christ is aiming at, where God looks for sin, and how we must understand the law in other instances, according to the rule here put into our hands, to judge of our state and condition.

Ver. 29. *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.*—That is, effectually; for doing it actually might still leave the adultery in the heart.

—*For it is profitable for thee,* &c.—Stand fast in this belief: either self-denial, according to Christ, or the far greater sufferings of hell.

Ver. 30. *And if thy right hand offend thee,* &c.—Rather than any thing, though ever so dear and precious to thee, should hinder thee in thy Christian progress, or prove a means of insnaring thy soul and body, absolutely and totally forego it.

Ver. 32. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication.*—The Jews needed this precept*. Let all enter into the spirit

* Divorces would not have been so common among them, if they had understood the seventh commandment as the law of inward purity.

of it, and consider what mutual indulgence, tenderness, and forbearance, is required betwixt husbands and wives.

Ver. 33. *Again; ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."*—As if a sufficient regard was paid to the third commandment, if in the use of oaths there was nothing contrary to truth, or nothing but what we intended to perform. But in order to keep us at the greatest distance from all profanation of the great sacred name, Christ here warns us to avoid oaths of every kind, except in cases of necessity, how trifling soever they may seem to us; as implying an appeal to God, contrary to the reverence we owe him, and to that simplicity of speech which becomes those who fear him.

Ver. 37. *But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay.*—Let the general probity of your character, and known regard to truth be such, that your bare word may be credited; and, whether it is, or not, resolve to go no farther, *for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

LECTURE.

One great design of our Lord in his sermon on the mount was to furnish us with a rule for the right understanding of the law of the Ten Commandments; to the end that he might fasten a charge of guilt upon every soul of man; that so, under this conviction, we might fly to him as our only refuge from the curse and punishment of sin; and then endeavour, as his disciples, in virtue of our faith, and with the utmost sincerity of intention, to fashion our hearts and lives by the rule of the law, as stated and explained by him. The Scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish teachers, by stopping short at the letter, or outside of the

law, he tells us, in effect destroyed it. If they did not kill, they looked no farther. They would not understand that, when murder was forbidden, love was commanded; and that anger, scornful reviling, bitterness, and malevolence in the heart, was the very root of the sin of murder, and made them guilty before God. If they did not actually commit adultery, they never concerned themselves about inward purity. And again, in the matter of oaths, by feigning several cases in which it was pretended they might lawfully be used, they had taught men to depart from that simplicity of speech, and reverence for the name of God, which the third commandment strictly requires. In these three instances Christ sets himself to correct their mistakes; and, as I said, hereby furnishes us with a rule for the right understanding of all the rest of the commandments; for every one of them has an inward and spiritual, as well as an outward, meaning: and if we have not an eye to both; if we do not take in the whole compass of our duty; if we understand only one thing by each of them, when God intends we should understand two or more; we shall of course judge ourselves by a false rule, and be blind all our days to the sin which he sees in us.

The first commandment says, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Take notice, not the world, nor any thing in it; for whatever has our heart is our god; and we are plainly told the meaning is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

Again; What is the reason that you never charge yourselves with the breach of the second commandment? You are sure you do not make, nor bow down to, an image: but do you worship God with a pure heart, according to his mind and will, and put your whole trust in him?

You rest from bodily labour on the sabbath day, and,

perhaps, attend upon the service of the church; but, behold, this is nothing but custom, and a mere force upon you, if you do not purpose, in all respects, to keep it holy to the Lord, as a working day for your souls, and a means appointed of God to call off your thoughts wholly from the world, to remind you of, and prepare you for, your eternal rest in heaven.

Father and mother, with all who are comprehended under those names, governors, ministers, masters, as well as natural parents, are they honoured according to the extent of the command, not only in speech and behaviour, but with that inward respect and reverence of the heart, which is due to them for their several offices and relations?

You may labour diligently to supply your own needs, and think you abhor the base vice of stealing; at the same time that you are not over nice and scrupulous in the point of not defrauding others in buying and selling; and, perhaps, have kept back many a penny which God put into your hands for the use of the poor.

You may not bear false witness against your neighbour upon oath in a court of justice, in a matter which concerns his life, or property; but how greedily do you listen to evil reports of him, and often join with others to wound his reputation?

You do not covet what is another man's, so as to endeavour to deprive him of it, right or wrong; but see whether you do not envy him in secret, and are thoroughly contented with your own lot.

Now, let me tell you, that your understanding, or not understanding, the commandments according to the mind of Christ, is a matter of very great consequence; even no less than that of your acceptance or refusal of salvation by him. The Scribes and Pharisees knew very well that killing, adultery, and false swearing, were forbidden by

the law of God; and not being guilty of the outward act, or open breach of the commandments, they thought they could justify themselves to God and man, and needed no forgiveness. Christ, therefore, here shows how short they were in their interpretation of the law, and what lame work they made of their obedience. And what he said to and of them, he says to all; you must let him meet with the Scribe and Pharisee in your hearts, or else you will justify yourselves, and plead not guilty to the last, when all the while he has damning sin to lay to your charge. In a word, and all I shall say further to you at present is, that the great difference between believers and unbelievers is this: believers see and acknowledge *that* to be sin which the word of God tells them is so, believe that all sin is damnable, and fly to Christ for the hope of forgiveness; the rest of the world either overlook the greatest part of their sins, or make light of all sin; and, seeing no need of Christ, live and die unbelievers. The Lord deliver us from all blindness and hardness of heart, and bring us to him in prayer for mercy, hungering and thirsting after the blessings of Christ.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him of all believers, look down with an eye of pity and compassion upon this congregation; awaken the dead souls in it, that they may see, before it be too late, the things which belong unto their peace. Lord, let not our sin be hidden from us, lest we perish in it. Let Christ be our teacher to bring us to the right knowledge of the law, and the law our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; that, being condemned by it, we may cry to thee out of the depth of our misery, trust only in thy mercy, be revived with the offer of it, and washed from our sins in the blood of the holy Jesus. Let thy Spirit go with us into the

depth of our hearts to try and search us, to convince us that we are sinners, and that the wages of sin is death. Suffer us not to be deceived to our eternal undoing, either by overlooking our transgressions, or lessening the guilt of them. Thy law, as interpreted by Christ, is the law of our inward parts, as well as outward actions; the measure of our duty, and the rule of thy justice; and if we are not conformed to it in every thought, word, and deed, it gives us up to condemnation. But, O blessed God, here thy mercy found us, lying in our blood; and though thou art the same unchangeable God for ever and ever, and wilt not suffer sin to go unpunished, yet thou didst not leave us to perish, but gavest thine own Son to be a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. O Lord, humble us for them, that we may fear nothing so much as to offend thee, and be won by a sense of thy goodness to live unto him that died for us. Hear us, O God of our salvation; bring us home to thy flock, and keep us in thy peace; increase our faith, and confirm us in the truth of a pure obedience; supply all our wants, pardon all our failings, and accept us for his sake, thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

SECTION IX.

St. Matthew, v. 38.

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.—This was to be the rule in judgment; or the judge, from a knowledge of circumstances, might proceed to this extremity; but it was not to be the rule and measure of every man's forbearance.

Ver. 39. *But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil.*— With evil, in a revengeful disposition.

—*But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*—Submit to a further injury: be immovable in thy patience: at no rate return the blow. If thou wilt be a Christian, never think of being like other men.

Ver. 40. *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*—It is said upon this, do not go to law for a small matter; and, when you do, let it not be with heat and animosity, or great anxiety about the event: but this seems to me full as hard as not going to law at all. I do not say, or believe, that we are forbidden to recover, or defend our property: but, considering the certain vexation of a law-suit, it may admit of a doubt, whether a man will find himself a gainer, in point of happiness, at the end even of a successful one.

Ver. 41. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*—Show that thy temper is proof against such unreasonable compulsion; and that thou art so far from making a grievance of it, as to be ready to do more.

Ver. 42. *Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*—If thou hast no just pretence for denying, make none. Be ready and willing in both cases; but still, certainly, with discretion, and due consideration of the wants of others, and thy own ability.

Ver. 43. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*—This was not said by the law; but by their corrupt hearts, putting a false construction upon some parts of it, such as Deut. xxiii. 6.

Ver. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies, &c.*—Is it not enough not to hurt our bitterest enemies, or to do good to them, but must we also bless and pray for them? And must our hearts go still further than our tongues, must we love them too? O Jesus, this is hard to flesh and blood, and here the world is at deadly war with thee! But thou canst abate us nothing of our happiness; and, therefore, callest us to receive this disposition from thee; for it is thy gift, and thou alone canst work it in us.

Ver. 46. *Do not even the publicans the same?*—Whatever nature does, or can do, it is a poor thing in a Christian not to go beyond it. Christ teaches, and grace will enable us to do a great deal more.

Ver. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*—According to the instance before mentioned; not forbearing to do good to the undeserving.

Lord Jesus, thou here strikest us to the earth with a light from heaven. Great is our blindness and corruption in the want of it; great is our misery in rejecting it. Do thou speak it into our souls, and make it our guide to thyself, who alone canst raise us up again. O! let our conviction be spiritual, that our healing may be so too; and that being revived with thy Gospel of grace and forgiveness, we may submit to thy teaching, serve thee in love, and delight in thy commandments.

LECTURE.

I CONCLUDED the last time with observing to you the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. One takes the word of God for the measure of his duty, with full submission of his understanding and heart to

it; and, finding himself condemned by it, flies to Christ in repentance, as the only hope and only Saviour of sinners, with a desire and will to live to him in obedience. This man is a believer, a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. The unbeliever is blind to his sin, and makes light of the guilt and danger of all sin. He will not take the word of God for the rule of his obedience, nor be convinced by it, that the desert of sin is death; and, therefore, seeing no need of Christ to save him from it, he continues in darkness; and, as he does not receive him for his Saviour and Teacher, is ignorant of the extent of his duty, fearless of God, fearless of sin, and, if he goes out of the world in this condition, dies a lost man. I beseech you attend to what I am going to say, and the Lord enable you to discern, before another day passes over your heads, to which of these two kinds you belong. Our Lord Jesus Christ is here opening to us the law of the Ten Commandments in their true, inward, spiritual meaning, as God intends they should be understood; and teaching us that they have a greater depth, and take in a larger compass than we naturally imagine, as being the law of our hearts, as well as outward actions. He tells us that anger, bitterness of speech, and all scornful reviling, is a degree of the sin of murder, and a branch from the same root; that lustful looking is adultery; and vain oaths of all kinds, how trifling soever they may seem to us, a breach of the third commandment. And his design in giving us the true interpretation of the law in these three instances was to put a key into our hands, and furnish us with a rule for the right understanding of all the rest; a mistake in this matter being at the hazard of our souls: for it is evident at once, that if we think of pleading our obedience without knowing how much goes to it, and judge ourselves by one rule when God will

judge us by another, we must be undone. Do you then receive Christ for your teacher? Are you set down in this belief, as a point never to be questioned, that as he could not possibly be mistaken in his declaration of the mind and will of God, so you must judge of your state and condition in the sight of God, according to the rule he has set before you? Then I can pronounce for you, that you are sinners in your own eyes, and have found yourselves transgressors of every one of the commandments; many openly, according to the outward letter, in the grossest sense, and all according to the inward, spiritual meaning of them. What then will you do in this extremity? Will you sit down in despair, and give yourselves up for lost; or will you try to make your peace with God, as well as you can, by repentance and better obedience; or will you go to Christ with your souls? Come, my friends, I would hope this matter is now drawn to a point; and that, seeing no means of deliverance, nor hope of safety in any thing but Christ crucified, you will joyfully receive him for your Saviour in his blood, and welcome his glad tidings of salvation from the curse and eternal punishment of sin, as the greatest of all mercies, exactly suited to your case, and the very thing you want. If you are ignorant of the extent of your duty, as explained by Christ, or unconcerned about it; if you are ignorant of your sin, and the curse it brings upon you; if you are ignorant of the necessity of Christ's death to save you from it, and have not been seeking after the faith which brings you to him, let your hearts tell you of these things without delay. Indeed they must, and will, if ever you have any benefit of him; if ever he is precious to you as your Jesus: for if ever you know a work of grace, you will see your death in trespasses and sins, and where life is to be had. You will know exactly that the sum and substance of his

religion, the whole order and method of his teaching, the whole design of his life and death, is, 1. To convince us of sin, of the deadly nature of all sin, and the greatness of our own. 2. Of righteousness, justification, and peace with God by him, and only through his blood-shedding. And 3. To fix us in a state of willing obedience to him, according to his rule. Then we shall find the truth of that saying, but not before—"His commandments are not grievous."

It is a hard lesson our Master has been teaching us, not to indulge anger, or speak scornfully and contemptuously of any man; to pluck out the adulterous eye; to bear an inward and most profound reverence to the sacred name of God; not to resist evil, by returning it; to suffer injury rather than go to law; to be patient under violence and unreasonable compulsion; to help every one according to his necessity and our abilities; to love, and bless, and do good to our enemies, and those that hate us: these, I say, are hard lessons, and grievous to flesh and blood, as you know very well by your own experience, in struggling against the yoke of them, and shaking it off your necks. But then it is because you are not grounded in the faith of his love; for that would both incline you to learn of him, and make his commands easy to you. Every one who has come to him for washing in his blood, and knows the greatness of the mercy, and the love there was in it, can say to him in truth and sincerity, "Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?" And if we do not, we know him not; we do not believe in him; we are not his disciples; he will never own us; he will say to us at the last day, "Depart from me, I know you not." Let us beseech God to take from us all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of his word, to bring us in repentance and faith to Christ, and by him to a state of pure obedience in love.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who in these last days hast spoken to us by thy Son; give us grace to receive him as our Teacher, that knowing from his mouth the whole extent and purity of thy law, and our manifold transgressions of it, we may be convinced of our want of mercy, gladly receive him as our Saviour, and behold him with the eye of faith, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away *the sin of the world*." Great is our blindness, great is the rebellion of our wills; and though thou warnest us of our sin and danger, to the end thou mayest deliver us from it, and bring our straying hearts back again to thee in love, yet we choose darkness rather than light, and continue stubborn in unbelief. But, O Lord, who workest in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure, make speed to save us, make haste to help us. Take the veil from our hearts; guide us into the right knowledge of our duty, that thereby we may see the greatness of our sin. Let thy hatred of sin, and will to punish it, be always before our eyes, that we may fear to continue in it. Remove from us that spirit of slumber which makes us deaf to thy calls, and keeps us hardened against thy offers of mercy. Thou hast made all thy goodness to pass before us in the person of Jesus Christ; establish us in the faith of it, that, rejoicing in thy peace, we may be diligent to keep it, by learning of him to be meek and patient, charitable and forgiving, to live in friendship with all the world, to be kind to the evil and unthankful, to love and bless our enemies, to be thy children by similitude of nature, and perfect as thou art perfect, in a will to all goodness. O Lord, hear us, help us; grant that, as the disciples of Jesus, in faith and love, in truth and purity, we may pass quietly and safely through the world; welcome death, and find mercy

in the great day, for his sake, and through his alone merits, the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION X.

St. Matthew, vi. 1.

Take heed—It is not a matter to be lightly regarded. The motives of our actions, especially those which we think will recommend us to the notice of God, had need be well considered; for such as our aims and intentions are, such are we.

—*That ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.*—1. They must be *done;* this is necessarily implied. 2. To a right end, and from a right principle; for the relief of the needy, in love, and for God's sake. Doing them to be seen of men, is confessedly so mean and shameful an end to propose to ourselves, that every one will be ready to disavow it. But—*take heed.*

—*Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*—He cannot take that as done to him, which is not. A man, like ourselves, would not be so imposed upon. Every word is weighty. *Reward*—Think whether it is not worth striving for, and how it may be secured: *Of your Father*—An earthly father would be sure to proportion the reward to the desert: *Which is in heaven*—and rewards with heaven.

Ver. 2. *Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do.*—If they really did so, and the expression is not rather descriptive of a most nauseous vanity, we may suppose the pretence for sounding the trumpet was to call the poor together.

—*Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.*— What they seek after, the praise of men: the meaning further is, and all they ever shall have. The action is lost as to God. Ah! make deep search into thyself. Dost thou give according to thy ability? Much, if thou hast much? And if thou dost, Hast thou one unblemished offering of a pure alms in all thy life, to be the ground of a reward?

Ver. 3. *But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doth.*— If it were possible, conceal it even from thyself. But how does this consist with the injunction, to *let our light shine before men?* Very well; if nothing of this kind is done out of ostentation, and the heart would always choose secrecy, if it was not for the sake of some greater good.

Ver. 4. *That thine alms may be in secret.*—Always as much in secret as may consist with a better end. And observe, not to gain *thy own* applause.

—*And thy Father which seeth in secret.*— Whether good or bad; every thing is, every moment, full in his view. O! let the thought of this piercing eye lay us all in the dust.

—*Himself shall reward thee openly.*— Whatever is done for the Lord's sake shall in no wise lose its reward, but shall be amply repaid in the view of all the world; and whatever imperfections adhered to thy best works, will, together with all thy other sins, be forgotten, as having been all washed away by the blood of the Lamb. Here is encouragement for believers to work in faith and love. I say to believers; for those who are of the works of the law, and place not their whole dependence for salvation on the Lord Jesus, are under a curse, and must expect no favourable allowances. Heaven is freely bestowed through Jesus alone; but the believer will find it furnished more or less when he shall arrive there,

as he has more or less abounded in the work of the Lord. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Cor. ix. 6.

Ver. 5. *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.* — It is here supposed that all do pray; and our Saviour gives two important directions concerning it. 1. To avoid all ostentation in prayer, or public performance of it, on purpose to draw the eyes of men upon us, which is rank hypocrisy. 2. Not to make worldly things the chief matter of our prayers, which is downright heathenism. And, 3. He prescribes a form of prayer, weighty in words and sense, as the ground-work of all our petitions, and therein pointing out our greatest wants.

Ver. 6. *But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.*— Do this; but withal be sure to enter into the depth of thy heart.

— *And when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.*—As if there was no other being in the world but God and thyself. Oh! it is an awful work and an awful time! Dost thou, canst thou pray, and pray thus?

— *And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* — The great day will be the happy time to have thy prayers known, and publicly proclaimed.

Ver. 7, 8. *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do,* &c. — With heathenish hearts, and for heathenish ends; plainly, for worldly things, and chiefly, if not solely, for them. I conceive that neither all repetitions, nor length in prayer, are here condemned; but the matter of them, as if we should be heard for our importunity, or much speaking, when we ask amiss. Our temporal wants are known to God, and will all be provided for in such a manner as is best for us. They

must not engage our desires, and engross our souls, so as to be made the burthen of our prayers; and we shall hear more in this chapter of a fruitless anxiety about them: but spiritual blessings we may, and must, be anxious about; and, if we know the value of them, cannot be too earnest in prayer for them. Pray for these with a feeling heart, and then thou hast Christ's own example for *saying* the same words.

LECTURE.

Are you attending to our Lord's sermon on the mount? Do you consider who is the teacher, Jesus Christ, speaking to us in *the Father's* name and *his own?* What could we desire, if we might have the wish of our hearts, but to be so taught? Where else shall we go for instruction in divine things? What reason have we to bless God for putting this light into our hands? And how utterly inexcusable shall we be if we do not receive it? I say, therefore, again, Are you attending to it, and often thinking of it? Did you ever so much as once, in your whole lives, read these three chapters, on purpose to know the mind of Christ, and with a full resolution to learn your duty, and receive a law at his mouth? When you heard him telling you eight or nine times over who are blessed and who are not, what did you tell yourselves of your condition? Can you say that you are poor in spirit, godly mourners, meek men and women, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, lovers of Christ's truth, and so well established in it, that you can bear to be hated and persecuted for it? Is it your great desire to fulfil the law of God as explained by him, and submit to his strict rules of self-

denial? You know you must, or else you refuse to be his disciples, deny his authority, and throw up your obedience to him. You must be blind and self-willed indeed, if you can hope to be blessed here or hereafter in opposition to his teaching. You will say, perhaps, that none come up to this perfection of holiness, and that his doctrine must be taken with a large allowance for human infirmity. No, not in any one instance; he is at a word with us, and will not suffer us to prescribe to him, much or little. Though you do not exactly fulfil your duty in every thought, word, and deed, you must not tamper with the exact rule of it; you must not diminish one jot or one tittle from the sacredness and perfection of the law; you must not call any thing that Christ says in question; you must not think that God is not in earnest in his commands; you must take them as they are set before you; and if you are breakers of them, as you certainly are, when they are rightly understood, suffer yourselves to be condemned by them. For it is one great design of Christ in opening the law in its purity, and full extent, to convince us of our transgressions of it; and, if he does but once bring us to this, he will find means to raise us up again; he will manifest himself to us as our Saviour from the guilt of sin, speak peace to our consciences, and settle us upon a right ground of obedience, by reconciling our hearts and wills to the strictness of his commands.

See, then, what you must do in the peril of your souls. You have not kept the law of God. You have not so much as been careful to inform yourselves what it is. You must now learn it of Christ. You must hear him calling you to repentance. You have heard that his name is Jesus, and that he was so called, because he saves his people from their sins. As you read on in the gospels, you will perceive how he made good his character of the

Saviour, and proved himself, by his mighty works, to be ordained of God to that office; and at last died upon the cross for our sins, rose again for our justification, ascended with our nature into heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. You must consider all these things well, and say, every one for himself, this is the very person I want; if what he has done and suffered for me will make my peace with God, I have great cause to accept and rejoice in the mercy. I see that I am received to it in a way of satisfaction to justice; Christ is my ransom, and his all-sufficiency is a full answer to all my doubts and fears. If you are come thus far on your way, what do you think will be the next step in your Christian progress? Will you slight your Saviour, who has done so great things for you? Will you refuse him your best obedience? Will you not suffer him to carry you on in the way of all his servants? Will you not hear him saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments?" Yes, now ye *can* do it; now he has gotten a friend in your hearts; now your eyes will be unto God's eye upon you, and your only aim in all you do will be his favour and approbation; now you can pray in secret, fast, give alms, and perform all your acts of devotion with a single intention to live in communion with him, and for no other end but his honour and glory. You will gladly learn of Christ, receive all his commands without so much as wishing that they were less strict and pure than they are, and grieve for nothing so much as your coming short of them. Let him then first bring you to a sense of your guilt and danger, that you may come by conviction of sin to repentance, by repentance to faith, and by faith to a new state of obedience. And if you are not settled in a purpose of obedience, from a root of love, trace the matter up to its fountain head, and you will find it end in downright unbelief and hardness of heart; you never saw your want of Christ,

and therefore neither love, obey, nor believe in him. O Lord, search and try us, that we may know what we should pray for, and come to thee in the name of Jesus, for the will and the power to do all such good works as thou wilt graciously accept, and mercifully reward for his sake.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, whose eyes are as a flame of fire searching the heart; grant unto us, we beseech thee, that, from a continual lively sense of thy presence, we may endeavour to approve all our thoughts, words, and actions to thee. Thou, who seest in secret, promisest to reward us openly for whatever we do in pure obedience to thee, and with a single eye to thy honour and glory. Lord, thy favour is life, thy acceptance of our imperfect services is far beyond our deserts. Our alms are the leavings of thy bounty to us; our prayers are thy own work in us; and if we have found grace in thy sight, to be faithful to thy gifts, to relieve thy poor, to spread our wants before thee in humble dependence on thy mercy, thine is the praise and the glory. Be thou, O God, the great object of our desires, and the ruling passion of our hearts, that we may study only how to please thee, and fear nothing so much as to offend thee. Deliver us from the wretched hypocrisy of making our alms a sacrifice to our vanity. Let not our religious duties be polluted and abominable in thy sight, by being performed with a view to the praise of men. Discover to us that pride of heart which cleaves to all we do; and humble us in the dust for our forgetfulness of thee, disregard of thy pure, all-seeing eye, and contempt of thy blessed rewards. And, O blessed Lord, who didst freely deliver up thy own Son for us all, bring us to the fountain opened in him for sin and uncleanness; let his teaching convince us of our sin and great impurity, that we may come

him in repentance for washing in his blood, be revived with the hope of thy mercy, and from henceforth live worthy of it, by fashioning ourselves according to his rule, and be accepted for his sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SECTION XI.

St. Matthew, vi. 9.

After this manner therefore pray ye.—Not seldom in these very words, and always according to the spirit of them. Drawing nigh to God in faith and filial trust, as to a gracious Father; but with reverential awe as to a Father in heaven, where our home and inheritance is, and where our hearts should be; giving him the honour due unto his name, which is great, wonderful, and holy, in thought, word, and work, in worship, heart, and life; praying for the enlargement and prosperity of his kingdom of grace, that it may come in our souls, and in all the world; desiring to do his will with the cheerfulness and love of the blessed angels, and to suffer it with humble resignation; forgiving, loving, and living in charity with all men; flying to him for strength in the hour of temptation; and for deliverance from the power and malice of the devil, and from the evil of our own hearts; ascribing all we have, all we do, and all we are, to him only, whose is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory; and as for the concerns of this life, leaving them in the hands of God, and being content with, and thankful for, such things as we have.

Ver. 11. *Give us this day our daily bread.*—What? No more? Only food and raiment? If you think this hard, put your prayer for more into some such form as this, and then see whether you will not be ashamed of it.

"Lord, thou givest, and wilt give me from time to time, what is needful for the body, and the support of those who depend upon me; but I cannot be content with this; I must have superfluities to feed vanity or pamper the flesh," &c.

Ver. 14, 15. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses.* — It should be carefully remarked what stress Christ himself lays upon this, when it is the only article of his own prayer, which he thought fit to repeat, and enforce with a particular caution.

Ver. 16. *Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.* — This direction concerning fasting is needless, if men might choose whether they will fast, or no.

— *For they disfigure their faces.* — Putting on forced looks, as if they were not the same men.

Ver. 17. *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face.* — Appear as at other times; or rather more cheerful than usual, and as keeping a feast instead of a fast.

Ver. 18. *That thou appear not unto men to fast.* — How much of our religion, and of all the good we do, has no better foundation than a regard to men, will one day be known. We should do well to think of the matter now; not only because every thing so done is hypocrisy, and worse than lost; but because, all the while, we are kept in wretched ignorance of our state.

— *Thy Father which seeth in secret.* — Observe, thrice repeated. Perhaps there is not any one truth better known, and more forgotten, than that God seeth in secret. But when we give alms, pray, and fast aright, is our religious character complete? No; the heart must be right in its deepest ground; and our Lord is now going to search it further in the great point of its earthly or heavenly bent.

Ver. 19. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.* —Superfluous treasures. Whatever men do themselves, I am persuaded they cannot help thinking that those are the best Christians who come the nearest to this command. Beg of God to explain it to thee.

— *Where moth and rust doth corrupt*, &c. — What we thus treasure up is liable to accidents; and so far as we trust in it, our happiness is built on a wave of the sea. But there is something worse in the case; "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." — The assertion is evident. Would it were as evident to us, that whatever has our heart, is our God!

Ver. 20. *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* — What makes the Christian, but a steady aim for heaven, and an utter contempt of every thing in comparison of it? For this end Christ came from heaven, and is now speaking to us. Pray, pray, pray that it may not be in vain.

Ver. 22, 23. *The light of the body is the eye*, &c. — We all know the blessing of sight, and what follows upon the loss of it. The soul too has its eye, and is, as that is, all light or all darkness. Now when is that eye clear, and fit to do its office? When it is singly fixed on God and heaven. Prevailing love of the world, in a high or low condition, puts it out; and then how great is our darkness! We are blind in the worst sense, and cannot take one step in the road to happiness. If you think this one of Christ's hard sayings, you bear witness against yourself that your eye is not yet single.

LECTURE.

THERE are three or four things relating to our Saviour's sermon on the mount, which should be more especially taken notice of, and well fixed in our minds.

1. One is the authority, and infallible certainty of his teaching, and the necessity of understanding the law of the ten commandments, and all other parts of our duty, according to his declaration and exposition of them. For he says, "Verily, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled;" that is, as the law of God's giving and appointing, it must not be diminished, it cannot be dispensed with in any respect; it is in force to the end of the world, and must of all necessity be received with full submission, as the rule we are to conform to, and by which we shall be judged.

2. The result of this must needs be conviction of sin, and the danger of our condition. We have not fulfilled the law at all times, in all points, both according to its outward and inward, literal and spiritual meaning, and, therefore, are liable to its condemnation. If you do not know and believe this, you neither do nor can know any thing else in the Bible.

3. Here Christ takes us up, fulfils the righteousnes of the law in our stead, and pays the penalty of our sins, and what follows in this gospel, the miracles he wrought, his ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension, exhibit him to us in the office and character of the Saviour, the very help we all want, and is the opening of that saying which we meet with in the first chapter, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

4. It must be well remembered, that his people whom he saves, are those, and those only, who think it their happiness and bounden duty to be taught by him, to keep their eyes and hearts upon the rule he has set before them, and, in love to him, sincerely endeavour to obey his commandments. So that the law, by convincing us of sin and the danger of our condition. is our school-master to bring us to Christ: and Christ brings us to God pure and clean

in himself: and mercy, when it is earnestly sought after, and the greatness of it understood, turns the heart to God in love and obedience.

In the portion of our Lord's sermon, which has now been read, he has delivered to us a form of prayer, therein pointing out our greatest wants; for it is remarkable, concerning it, that all the petitions relate to spiritual things, except one, which is a prayer for nothing more than needful food, and intended to teach us our absolute dependence on God for every morsel we eat. He inculcates the necessity of our forgiving others, if we would have forgiveness of our offences at the hands of God. In the case of fasting, he repeats the caution he had given twice before, not to perform our religious acts with a view to the praise of men, but of God, who is to be the dearest treasure of our hearts; insomuch, that if we do not covet and seek after his rewards, and make it the great business of life to secure our heavenly inheritance, undervaluing every thing in comparison of it, we are in utter darkness, and as destitute of all spiritual light in our souls, as our bodies would be in the want of sight. Now what is the reason that we are generally so little better for Christ's instructions and commands, and have not so much as the form and appearance of his disciples, by putting in practice the rules of holy living which he has given us? Why do we not pray more, with a better knowledge of what we should pray for, and more earnestly than we do? Why is forgiveness of others so hard a matter with us, who all stand so much in need of forgiveness from God? Why do we not attain to that singleness of heart, and purity of intention, in seeking after God and heavenly treasures, which he recommends to us; but are as blind, sensual, and earthly-minded as ever? The reason is, because we are first blind to our sin; and, seeing no need of Christ to save us from it, have no lively, thankful sense upon our minds of the great mercy of

being so saved. For it is by our faith in him as the Saviour that he gets possession of our hearts, and brings them over to him in willing obedience as our teacher and lawgiver. See then how one thing depends upon another in the doctrine of Christ, and in what way and order we must attain to that perfection of holiness and heavenly-mindedness which he requires of us. It is a point never to be disputed, that under him, and as his disciples, we must be aiming at it, and continually going on to higher degrees of it; but, if you begin not here, you will lose all your labour. You must first know your sin, which you cannot do but by his teaching. You must come to him under a deep sense of your guilt, danger, and helplessness, for the grace of remission; and, when you can trust in him, and venture your souls upon him as your peace-maker in his blood, you will be in a condition to learn of him, and turn out all your own wisdom to submit to his directions. Then you will think it the greatest of all mercies that you may say to God, "*Our Father*," knowing that you are his children by faith in Christ Jesus, and entitled to all the blessings of his family and kingdom: and pray, as for your lives, that you may not come short of his heaven, where your home and inheritance is, and where your hearts should be.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who by thy Son Jesus Christ has taught and commanded us to pray, give us, we beseech thee, the true spirit of prayer, in the true knowledge and desire of what we should pray for. Convince us of the vanity and insufficiency of earthly things, and the exceeding great value of heavenly treasures, that we may not spend our days in the pursuit of what will not profit us, but wisely make choice of thee for our present portion and everlasting happiness. Great is our misery in forsaking thee, the God of all grace, and the fountain of all good; and thou

knowest that we are seeking death in the error of our lives. Deliver us from this blindness; give us the single eye and the pure heart; that knowing thee as a reconciled Father, we may commit our souls to thee in faith and prayer, in patience and well-doing; humbly depend on thee as thy children for the supply of all our wants, earnestly covet thy spiritual gifts; and be careful to secure thy promises and the blessings of Jesus Christ. Oh! send down the Holy Ghost to help our infirmities, to pray and groan within us for the true riches. Thou who didst deliver up thy own Son for us, and wilt also with him freely give us all things; grant us a right judgment, enlighten our dark minds, bend our stubborn wills, give us praying hearts. Fill them with the love and esteem of thy own blessed self; be thou our hope and our treasure in the land of the living; teach us, in the spirit of adoption, to call thee our Father; to hallow thy blessed name; to desire the coming of thy kingdom of grace in our souls, and in all the world, as the way to thy kingdom of glory; to imitate the holy angels in doing thy will; to depend on thee for the supply of our bodily wants; to forgive, that we may be forgiven; to trust in thee to support us in all dangers and temptations; to deliver us from all evil; and to be our God for ever and ever. Hear us, O Lord, for Christ's sake, thy beloved Son, in whom thou art always well pleased, and accept us to thy mercy in him, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XII.

ST. MATTHEW, vi. 24.

No man can serve two masters — Of opposite tempers or interests.

— *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*—The God of heaven, and the god of this world, or the covetous desires of it. Some choose the service of the latter, with an open contempt of the former, and more pretend to serve both: but the wisdom from above says it *cannot* be. It is impossible that the love of two things, so contrary in their nature, should dwell in the same heart.

Ver. 25. *Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life,* &c.—Not no thought at all, for the Scripture is as much for industry and prudent carefulness as any book in the world; but no anxious, distressing, distrustful thought, as if this world were your all, or as if there was no God in it, and he had not given us sufficient evidence of his fatherly care over us, or we could procure any thing for ourselves without him; or, as if contented, cheerful dependence on him was not our best security for the supply of all our real wants. See what follows in this view, and God give you understanding hearts.

— *Is not the life more than meat,* &c.—26. *Behold the fowls of the air.*—28. *Consider the lilies of the field*—Look at the book of nature, at yourselves, about, above, and beneath you, and see whether you have not abundant proof in every thing of God's power and will to provide for you.

Ver. 27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?* — All such care is as vain as impious. We can no more gain our ends by it, than we can add to our stature, or prolong our lives.

Ver. 31. *Therefore take no thought,* &c.—Our Lord has been endeavouring to argue us sweetly out of this worldly, carking, unbelieving, fruitless care, and repeats his own words to add weight to them. And now hear what cause you have to pray for yourselves.

Ver. 32. *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek*—And if *you* do, to the neglect of your souls, you are just

such heathens, whatever you think or call yourselves; that is to say, unenlightened by Christ, and no better for his teaching, than if you had never heard of it.

— *For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things* — Necessaries for the body; and will give us what we want; but is too wise and good to give us all we desire. Most of the heathenish soul-destroying care that is in the world is amongst those who have enough and to spare.

Ver. 33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* — A place and inheritance in it, as your chosen portion from God, together with the righteousness by which it is distinguished, and which all must have who belong to it; and take notice, it is here called *his* righte ousness; the righteousness of faith; both that which he gives in Christ, and that which he alone can work in us. Do you indeed seek this in the first place? Be not ignorant of what you are concerned above all things in the world to know and do; for it is in vain to seek it only in the second place.

— *And all these things shall be added unto you.* — What are you, if you cannot stay yourselves quietly upon this promise?

Ver. 34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* — It shall be provided for by him, who takes care for to-day, and who alone can provide for any day. Do not thou foolishly double the burden of every day by adding that of the next to it.

— *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*—Every day has trouble enough of its own, and will require all our thought to pass well through it. But why has every day some evil attending it? Because we are sinners, and to correct and bring us back again to God.

Happy, O Lord, is the man who takes thee for his

God, and makes full proof of it, by trusting in thy providential care, and resigning himself wholly to thy wise disposal. Let thy Spirit convince us of our sin in the want of this disposition, teach us an acceptable righteousness, and purge out the worldliness of our hearts, that, under a deep sense of thy infinite purity, we may do all our works as unto thee, who seest in secret, and will reward us openly, not for our imperfect and polluted services, but for the alone merits of Jesus Christ.

LECTURE.

The point to be brought under consideration upon hearing this passage of Scripture, is the desire or bent of the heart, what it chooses and seeks for itself, this world or the next, earthly things or Christ and his blessings. He would gladly turn our desires and affections into the right channel, and is very urgent with us to set up our rest in God; plainly giving us to understand, that if we do not seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, and clearly prefer our portion in it to every thing else, we are not his disciples. You will say at once, must we neglect our business? Is not industry a duty, and idleness a sin? Must we not provide for ourselves and families, and can we do this without working, thought, and care? No, certainly: let me therefore tell you wherein your mistake lies, and what that state of mind is which Christ would bring you to, and you must be aiming at, as Christians, with the whole will and endeavour of your souls. It is true, he says, and repeats his instruction, to the end it may be well observed, "take no thought for your life, or the support of it, take no thought for the morrow." And the reason he gives for it is, that our own care is vain, and that there is

a God above who knows, and will provide for our bodily wants. Now he does not, he cannot mean that we should take no thought at all about our worldly business, or leave the care of our maintenance wholly to God, without any contrivance or endeavours of our own; for this would be a flat contradiction to many other parts of Scripture, which is as much for diligence, industry, and prudent carefulness, as any book in the world, and never makes sloth and idleness the way to heaven. When, therefore, he says, "take no thought for your life," &c. he means, in comparison of heavenly things; not to give way to any distrustful, distressing, fretful, heart-vexing thoughts about your worldly affairs, as if there was no God; or as if they were your all, and you had not a better portion in him.

Now, you see where the mistake lies, and your way is plain before you. You must be diligent and careful in the management of your concerns; the Scripture calls you to it, God requires it of you, and will not otherwise provide for you; but then you must not be slaves to your bodies, you must take care of your souls in the first place, and so as you care for nothing else; your hearts are God's due, and if you take them from him you lose your interest in him, and are undone for ever. Here then you must examine yourselves, consider what is uppermost in your thoughts day by day, what you account your treasure, and what you most wish to see prosper in your hands. Christ says it must not be the world or the body; for if it is, you are still in an unbelieving, unenlightened, unconverted state. His aim is to turn our hearts, the desire and will of our souls to God, as our portion and treasure, in time and eternity; and if it is not ours to be so turned, we are still in the darkness of heathenism, and cannot have one true prayer for the life of our souls. I beseech you understand that this, and nothing but this, is conversion and the Christian state, viz. when God and

his heaven, Christ and his blessings, the Spirit and his work of power, are the things of your choice, eagerly coveted, and what you resolve to secure to yourselves, whatever becomes of your worldly concerns: nay, my brethren, you may leave them quietly and cheerfully in God's hands; for if "you seek his kingdom and righteousness in the first place," you have his word and promise, "that all these things," necessaries for the body, "shall be added unto you." The man who knows what the kingdom of God is, what Christ is, what it is to be righteous in him, and growing up under him to a new state of holiness, has found the pearl of great price, can leave his portion of worldly things contentedly to God, and rejoice in his lot whatever it is, because he knows it is God's choice for him, and that "all things shall work together for his good." This is the lesson which Christ has been teaching us, and knew to be necessary for us, though we think it hard, and have many things to say against it; but if we do not receive all his instructions with a full persuasion that he could not possibly be mistaken in what he has taught us, how can we pretend to believe in him? He has blessedness for us, tells us what it is, and came into the world to put us in the way of it; his sermon on the mount is the light of heaven put into our hands to guide us to glory and happiness; but if we will not hear him, he leaves us to our own choice, that is, unhelped and miserable.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who gavest us our being, regardest us as the work of thy own hands, and hast thine eye continually upon us for good, give us grace to know thee as our God, and to depend on thee as our heavenly Father. We are naturally blind and self-willed, take the world into our hearts, and choose it for our portion, and are there-

fore discontented and unhappy. Thou pitiest our follies, correctest our mistakes, and hast taught us by thy Son to resign ourselves wholly to thy just government, providential care, and wise disposal. Thou madest us for thyself, and evermore desirest to give thyself to us, and art always working in us to guide us to thyself. Oh! be thou the God of our hope, as thou art the God of all our mercies. Teach us by the mighty power of thy Spirit to adore and bless thee; to thank thee for the lot thou hast appointed us; and to be careful above all things to secure our portion in thee, by the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. We know it is thy will that we should be diligent in the work of our callings, and not trust in thee for the supply of our wants without using our own endeavours; but, O Lord, let it be in humble dependence on thee, and full submission to thy blessed will. Let us not forget thee in thy gifts; let us cast all our care upon thee who carest for us; let us seek thy kingdom and the righteousness thereof in the first place, and then we may rely on thy word and promise, that all things pertaining to this life, which thou knowest to be necessary and good for us, shall be added. Deliver us from that heathenish, self-destroying care which shuts thee out of our hearts; and grant that we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Enlighten our understandings, renew our wills and affections, bring us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee, and accept us to thy mercy in Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XIII.

St. Matthew, vii. 1.

Judge not — All depends on a close inspection into ourselves; and nothing hinders this more, or blinds us more fatally, than looking at the faults of others. 2. The evil of judging does not consist in seeing things and persons as they are, or fancying them to be good against plain evidence, but in imputing worse motives to the persons, or putting a worse construction upon their actions, than is necessary, in scorn and the pride of self-preference, without pity, prayer, or endeavour for their amendment.

— *That ye be not judged.* — Not so much by others, though we deserve their utmost censure, and shall be sure to have it, but of God, for our malice and uncharitableness. If this does not strike terror into us, and give some check to the daily, unheeded, reigning sin, what will? It is something to govern the tongue, but look further, and remove the evil from thy heart.

Ver. 2. — *For with what judgment ye judge,* &c. — Having sins of our own, we have already pronounced sentence upon ourselves, and shall be condemned out of our own mouths.

Ver. 3. *And why beholdest thou,* &c. — This is no unlikely supposition. Thy brother has his mote, some spot or blemish in his character; thou seest it with a scornful eye, to judge him; alas! thou art hidden from thyself: for thy corruption is naturally great; and if thou knewest it, and wert striving against it, it would certainly teach thee more compassion for others.

Ver. 4. *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother,* &c. — How canst thou have the face to do it with all thy own

blindness about thee? Christ, who had a perfect knowledge of the world, knew that nothing is more common.

Ver. 5. *Thou hypocrite.* — Thou mayest be tolerably clear in thy morals, but, perhaps, chargeable with disregard of God in thy inmost soul, base ingratitude to thy great Benefactor, and wretched defect in thy religious character. Let this sharp rebuke guide thee to every beam in thine own eyes, and, not least, to this of uncharitable judging.

Ver. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.*— If this is to be understood as a precept, it is, to leave men to themselves, when nothing else is to be expected but provoking and inflaming their brutish natures. But as this cannot certainly be foreseen, and endeavours must be used, and hazards run, to reclaim the worst of men, it seems to be rather a warning of what would too frequently happen in offering the precious truths of the Gospel to them. In the same manner as he said to the disciples at another time, *beware of men,* chap. x. 17. not meaning that they should be afraid of them, but to signify that there was danger from them.

Ver. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you,* &c. — Ask for what you should, and for what Christ here intends, viz. spiritual blessings, and you shall be sure to have them. But are you sure you do ask? For falling down upon your knees, and repeating the words of a prayer, is not asking. If the bent of the heart is more to other things, God knows that to be your prayer, and nothing else, whether you speak it or not. If you knew that you were asking to be a new man in the power of a divine faith, an humble, self-denying, despised follower of the Holy Jesus, perhaps, you would withdraw your petition.

Ver. 8. *For every one that asketh, receiveth.* — To stir us up to the duty, and cure us of all doubting, he sets as it were his seal to the grant, by repeating it.

Ver. 11. *If ye, then, being evil.* — Who are they that are evil? All; yourselves. He, who knew what was in man, excepts none. If this sermon does not force you to own the charge, you are past conviction.

— *How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give* — The reasoning is as plain as it is comfortable. But, alas! we can draw no sweetness from it. Our cold worldly hearts damp our faith and all our prayers, and will not let us ask what God never denies. If he had promised to give health and wealth, &c. we should ask an hundred times a day.

— *Good things* — The best of all good things; Himself, his Son, and Spirit, penitent hearts, pardon and peace, renewed wills, heavenly affections, and heaven itself.

— *To them that ask him.* — Not else. And why? 1. Because, though great and good in themselves, they cannot be so to us unless we desire them. You know this very well in other cases. 2. Because the will to desire them is the very disposition we should be in, and the want of it is our misery, curse, and death. You now see why we must pray daily, earnestly, perseveringly, for them, and leave our portion of worldly things to God.

Ver. 12. *Therefore.* — That is, as we would say, now to conclude; for the doctrinal part of the sermon ends here, and what follows is in the way of exhortation.

— *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you,* &c. — The equity of the rule is so evident, that hardly a man can be found who will charge himself with the breach of it; and many say foolishly, that as they are clear in this point, God will require no more of them; meaning, that they need no repentance, faith, or change of heart. But, 1. This rule, though so comprehensive as to be here called the law and the prophets, or the sum of what they teach concerning our duty to man, yet goes no further;

it does not take in our duty to God. 2. The more confessedly reasonable it is, the greater, and more apparent is our guilt, in case of transgression. And now, 3. Are you not guilty? Deny it not. Impose upon yourself no longer with this lie. I dare be bold to say there is not a day of your life in which you do not want forgiveness on this very account; and if you would follow the guidance of this light, so glaring to your conscience, there needs nothing else to bring you acquainted with the depth of your fall.

LECTURE.

If we are truly the disciples of Jesus, we shall be thankful for the instructions he has given us, make it our business to know them, and lay them up in our hearts. We may be sure they greatly concern us; it is knowledge of Christ's choosing for us; and if he had known of any thing better, he would have told us of it. Let him not speak to you in vain. Let me advise and exhort you to examine yourselves in this matter, and to judge of your state from your willingness to believe and receive what he has taught you, and the desire you find in yourselves to conform your hearts and wills to it. Indeed, it should be your resolution once for all, your constant study, and prevailing, sincere desire to be well grounded in his doctrine; and, if you have not this proof to give of your being Christians, you have nothing but the name. Is it so, or is it not? The question is for your souls, and must be answered. Do you sit down at the feet of Jesus, to learn of him the one thing needful, to receive his rules of holy living, to be put in the way to heaven? Do you say to yourselves concerning every particular of his sermon on the mount, this is the light of

heaven, this is my Lord's gift to me, this is my guide to blessedness, and I must neither be ignorant of it, nor suffer the cares of the world to keep it out of my heart? Has God met any of you with this thought, during the time that I have been reading and opening it to you — "What I hear is for my life, for my portion in Christ, for eternity; from henceforth I will be more careful to know the will of my Master and Saviour, that I may do it?" Consider, I beseech you, what you are, and what hope you can have, if that time never comes; if you let weeks, and months, and years, pass over your heads without any desire to know and profit by the instructions of Christ. And if that time is not yet come, let your hearts tell you of it this day; that you may see what you have been doing in the world, what danger you live in, and how dreadful it would be to die in this condition. Look back to the two chapters we have already gone through; redeem the time you have lost; give yourselves no rest, till you are better acquainted with the mind of Christ; resolve to be his disciples in the only way you can, by faith in him, and the humble submission of your souls to his teaching and authority.

Remember the lesson you have now heard from his mouth, and consider whether he does not meet with something in your own hearts and tempers which it behoves you to be well aware of, when he charges you not to be forward in judging. It is the common vice of mankind, and what we are naturally carried to by our pride and self-ignorance, to spy faults in others, and make the worst of them. But he, who knew what was in man, here gives a check to this wanton, censorious humour, and has a searching word for every one of us — Thou hypocrite, know thyself. Judge thyself first as thou oughtest, and hast cause enough for it; and when thy own eye is clear, thou wilt be in a condition to reprove,

correct, and help others. And whatever is the meaning of those words, "give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you;" whether Christ intended to forewarn his faithful followers of the dangers they would meet with in speaking of his truth, or out of his tender care for their safety, advises them not to expose it to those who are not fit for it, and themselves thereby to needless sufferings; I say, which soever of these was intended, be sure to ask yourselves the question — Is it my nature and temper to bear ill-will to, and if I can, do mischief to those who would advise and instruct me? Am I this dog or swine? Is this returning evil for good, "doing to men whatsoever I would that they should do unto me?" Concerning which you may observe, that with this remarkable direction, this golden rule, so equitable in itself, so clear to every man's conscience, and, if we would give way to the knowledge of ourselves, such a full discovery of our guilt, Christ closes his sermon; what follows in this chapter being chiefly by way of application or exhortation.

My brethren, what need have we to pray that the words which have been spoken to us by our God and Lord may be our study and delight; and that, receiving them in the love thereof, we may be changed into other men, and as happy as we can be upon earth, by walking steadfastly in the way to heaven, with the law of heaven written in our hearts, shining in our practice, and guiding all our thoughts, words, and actions! What a powerful call; what a blessed encouragement, as well as strict command, have we to pray, earnestly and constantly, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to guide us into the knowledge and love of the truth, when we hear him saying, in his own name, and by commission and au-

thority from the God of all our mercies, our heavenly Father, who has his eyes continually upon us for good — "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Here is the key of heaven, which unlocks all its treasures, put into our hands; the Lord put it into our hearts. Only understand, that when it is said, "every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened:" the meaning farther is, that if we do not ask, seek, and knock, with a feeling of our wants, and truth of desire for spiritual blessings, we have nothing, no grace, no mercy, no help from above, and are no better than we can make ourselves.

PRAYER.

O God, who seest us continually in all our guilt and pollution, enter not into judgment with us. We have sinned and done wickedly, we stand condemned at the bar of thy justice, and have no hope but in thy mercy; let us not destroy our title to it, and pass the sentence of condemnation upon ourselves, by uncharitable judging, and refusing to show that mercy to others which we all want from thee. Deliver us from this spiritual pride and wretched self-deceit; discover to us our own sins and imperfections, and teach us, by the true knowledge of ourselves, to help and pity all about us, to endeavour and pray for their amendment. Thou hast taught and commanded us to pray, and promisest to give whatever we ask in faith. Lord, we have great need to cry to thee for mercy and forgiveness; but thou knowest we do not ask in a sense of our wants, and are utterly blind to our own miserable unworthiness, whilst we look with an eye of severity and unmercifulness on the miscarriages of others. We do not practise that holy and blessed

ule, which our Lord has given us, of doing to all men as re would they should do to us; we are destitute of that rotherly love and compassion for them, which we expect om all others. Lord, search all our hearts this day, nd bring every one of us before thee with this prayer, od be merciful to me a sinner; that, being revived with ie hope of thy grace, and knowing thee as a reconciled ather in Jesus Christ, we may live in charity with all ankind, diligently employ our abilities for their succour id relief, help them to know thee their God, pity where e cannot help, commit our souls to thee in prayer, and e found of thee in the peace of the same Jesus Christ, ir blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XIV.

St. Matthew, vii. 13, 14.

'NTER *ye in at the strait gate*, &c.—Repentance, faith, id holiness, are the way of life according to Christ and is Gospel, and therefore the strait gate: corrupt nature, ind to itself; pride of heart, opposing itself to faith; id inveterate lusts, opposing themselves to reformation, l conspire to make it strait. Can you be often hearing f the strait gate, and the narrow way, and how few iere be that find it, without being in pain for yourselves, r ever once considering what the strait gate is, when ou entered upon the narrow way, and what progress you e making in it?

Ver. 15. *Beware of false prophets.*—As the Scribes id Pharisees were; and all are, who destroy the use and tent of the law, by a lame interpretation of it. Beware being a false prophet to thyself; in making less of the ommandments than Christ does, or not applying the

sacred rule in its whole length and breadth, as explained by him, to thy heart. By these two things men deceive themselves to their ruin. So long as they either take a false measure of their duty, or look only at their outward performances, they can never come to conviction of sin, and, by conviction of sin, to Christ.

—*Who come to you in sheep's clothing.*—With a fair appearance, but unchanged in their natures. He, who could not be deceived, says *ravening wolves*, only chained up.

Ver. 16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*—As they teach, so they are. Fruits here are evidently their own fruits; not, as some say, what their doctrine, whether good or bad, produces in others, but the effect of it upon themselves.

Ver. 17. *Every good tree*, &c.—As the man is, so are his actions. If the stock is bad from whence they proceed, no show or appearance of good can make them good.

Ver. 18. *A good tree cannot*, &c.—We know this to be a natural necessity. No care or culture can make a tree produce any other than fruit of its own kind. Christ has already told thee, O man, that thou art evil; and what then wilt thou do with thy nature, to make it bring forth good fruit? It is a loud call to thee to get thyself grafted into *him*.

Ver. 19. *Every tree which bringeth not forth*, &c.—Make the application; dread the sentence: it is said for thy sake.

Ver. 20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*—Ye who know the truth will not be deceived by them, however they may impose upon others.

Ver. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter*, &c.—Well, the matter is plain; fruitless profession, and empty faith, are not sufficient; the will o

God must be done. Did you ever think deeply of this; and that you may as well attempt to alter the nature of God and heaven, as to go thither with wills contrary to his? Do you read the Scripture diligently to know what the will of God is, and how you must be enabled to do it? Now let your consciences speak.

Ver. 22. *Many will say to me in that day, &c.*—O! that day! *that* day, he says, supposing we cannot but know the importance of it. In that day we shall all see him, who is now speaking to us of it, either as an eternal friend, or inexorable judge. To prepare us for that day he came into the world, he died; and all our days will have a most unhappy ending, if they are not a preparation for it.

— *Many will say to me, &c.*—Teachers, who have done great things, been highly thought of, and bestowed heaven upon themselves, will then be weighed in another balance, and the motives of their good, as well as the evil of their bad deeds, be brought to judgment. And so will many of their hearers too find themselves dreadfully mistaken at the last. The reason is told us.

Ver. 23. *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*—The sin, which now blinds us, will then most surely condemn us. Therefore, now is the time to look for it in ourselves, to come with it to Christ for pardon, and put away the accursed thing. *Depart* is a searching word.

Ver. 24. *Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them.*—Lord, we must hear, and do them: but without thee we can do nothing. We must first be in thee both for the will and the deed.

—*I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.*—Is that rock Christ, or thyself?

Ver. 26. *Shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand.*—Here we have a builder too, perhaps a baptized man, and a professor of religion.

And what so likely to be his sandy foundation, as himself, and the boasted reckoning of his works and services?

Ver. 27. *Great was the fall of it.*—The fate of every house, however beautiful, which is not founded on Christ. It must all come tumbling down, and not one stone be left upon another.

Ver. 28. *The people were astonished at his doctrine.*—Are *you?* While you were hearing it, was it as fire searching your inward parts? Has it laid you open to yourselves, to your great astonishment?

Ver. 29. *For he taught them as one having authority.*—He has with *us*, when we resolve to know what he taught, think of it day by day, and submit to it unfeignedly.

—*And not as the Scribes.*—They were lifeless, dull teachers, and, not having searched themselves, could not search others.

LECTURE.

We are now come to the conclusion of our Lord's sermon on the mount. How have you received it? What do your hearts say to it? What has it done for you? Which of you has been stirred up by it to say, "This is the great Teacher, the Lord from heaven, and I must hear him; here is searching work, but I must submit to it upon the peril of my soul; it is a strait gate I have to enter into, and a narrow way I must walk in; but unless Christ was mistaken in his knowledge of it and of me, I must be found in it, or perish?" Upon the whole, I would gladly turn your attention to these two points; one of which is, that the law of God must necessarily be understood as Christ has explained it; and if so, we are all guilty, and liable to a sentence of

condemnation. The other is, that none but he can relieve us from that sentence. I beseech you, observe; the law of God is the rule we must live and be judged by; and, therefore, it greatly concerns us to have a right understanding of it. For, if we are ever so much in earnest in our duty, and at the same time take a false measure of the rule we are to walk by, we must, of course, come short of the obedience which God requires of us. Behold, we do thus mistake, and so Christ tells us. The Pharisee, in the heart, looks only at the bare letter, or outside of the commandments; and, if we do not actually kill, or forswear ourselves, or commit adultery, we make no account of sinful anger proceeding from a root of hatred, want of inward reverence to the holy name of God, and the evil lusting of an adulterous eye. But Christ teaches us to understand every one of the commandments in a different manner, as reaching the heart and all its motions; and by this law we must abide, if ever we know how the case stands with us in respect of our obedience, and would not be deceived in a matter of life and death. And, accordingly, whenever a soul is to be awakened, and brought home to God, the law is opened to it in its whole length and breadth; and when it would plead freedom from outward, gross pollutions, the Spirit keeps it close to Christ's rule, and discovers to it a world of unknown guilt in an evil heart and evil nature. Now, old excuses of weakness, surprise, strength of temptation, mercy for all, or being better than some others, and many such, will not do. The law is broken, sin is found upon it, and that word has overtaken it, "the wages of sin is death." Perhaps, but few, if any of you, can clear yourselves in respect of outward sin; but if you could, still there is a heavy charge lying against the heart, so that *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* Make, therefore, this use of Christ

in the first place, as the expounder of the law, and the opener of your guilt, and you will be prepared for him as your life, and the only Saviour of sinners. Then the preaching of peace with God through Jesus Christ will be glad tidings to you indeed; and, as you read on in the Gospels of his miracles of healing, death upon the cross, resurrection, and ascension, it will be the joy of your hearts to think that all he did and suffered was for your sakes, to beget faith in you, to deliver you from death and condemnation, and restore you to the hope of heaven.

These, then, are the two points I told you of, which all Christians must understand, and be well grounded in, viz. the knowledge of sin by Christ's teaching, and salvation from it by his suffering. What then? shall we continue in sin, because grace hath so abounded in our deliverance from it? Shall we be unfaithful, disobedient, and rebels to him who hath done so much for us? Shall we do nothing for his sake, and at his bidding, who came to us with bowels of melting pity, to purchase with his own blood the forgiveness of all our sins, both open and secret, to satisfy justice, to save us from death, and make way for the mercy of heaven to flow in upon us? Oh! let every heart say, God forbid. Remember that the servants and redeemed of Jesus Christ love him as sure as they are so, and show their love to him by keeping his commandments, and have the advantage above all others for a pure and free obedience in the sense of his love to them. They believe they can only be blessed in his way, and, therefore, cleave to his instructions, and treasure them up in their hearts. Ask yourselves, as you will answer it to your souls, whether you think you can be blessed, here or hereafter, in opposition to his teaching. Remember every day of your lives what you have now heard solemnly pronounced by him, that he

only is the wise man, who heareth his sayings, and doeth them; and that it is in vain to call him Lord, Lord, or hope for any benefit from him, by pretending to believe in him, without doing the will of God. And if you will not remember these things, be assured that he will remember the words here spoken by himself, and say to you in that day, the last of your hearing them, and the first of your eternal misery—"I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." I shall close our review of Christ's sermon on the mount with a few general reflections on its nature and design.

The Divine Teacher utterly confounds all human wisdom and all worldly schemes of happiness.

Christ, by his exposition of the law, and binding it upon us in its purity and whole extent, as reaching the heart, and all its motions, calls aloud to every man not to mistake his state and nature, righteousness or strength. For if he has delivered to us the right, spiritual opening of the commandments, and they require nothing less of us than an absolute conformity, outward and inward, both of action and affection, verily we are all guilty, and have neither paid a full obedience to them, nor can do any thing towards it without some better help than our own.

Christ, therefore, in one view of him, here carries on the deadly ministration of the law, and lays us condemned at his feet, it being one great end of his interpretation of the law, to define sin, and promote conviction in us.

Now the necessity and great blessing of the Gospel opens upon us, as the very thing we want, in its two capital points, of remission and supernatural aid. For Christ convinces of sin, to bring us to faith; and by faith back again to the law, with all possible advantage for performance; that is to say, under a sense of God's

love to us, with hearts warmed with redeeming mercy, and invigorated by the power of the Holy Ghost. For

The heart must be engaged in it, and woe be to the man who does not follow Christ in this part of his office, by taking the law, as expounded by him, for the rule of his conscience, and his guide to perfection.

Upon the whole, therefore, he does not here chiefly preach the Gospel — remission of sins, and acceptance with God, through him, by faith — but the law: to show us our want of the Gospel, and drive us into it, and also what it will make us; what we are by nature, and what we must, and shall be, by and under grace. If this remark was attended to, and allowed its due weight, Christ would not be set up against himself, as a preacher of morality, in opposition to his own Gospel, and commission to the apostles, Mark, xvi. 15, 16. God be thanked, he does preach morality, and just such a pure morality as we want, for the recovery and happiness of our natures. But all our endeavours will be sadly frustrated, if we do not comply with his method of attaining it, by first believing in him for the remission of sins, and sanctification of the Spirit. Let us then give earnest heed to his instructions, remembering the voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye HIM.*

PRAYER.

O blessed Jesus, the great Prophet and Teacher of thy people, give us grace to receive thy rules of holy living, and write them in our hearts, we beseech thee. Deliver us from all deceivers; deliver us from the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Thou hast told us that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life; but out of it we perish, and thou who camest into the world to guide us into it, wilt enable us to find and persevere in it. Thou who art mighty to save, who alone

canst save, and who hast promised to save us, our eyes are to thee for help and deliverance. Grant us repentance unto life, give us faith to believe in thee as the Saviour in thy blood, save us by mercy, save us to holiness. Stir us up effectually to make our calling and election sure, by following thee, who art the way, the truth, and the life. Let thy strength be made perfect in our weakness. Teach us by thy Spirit to know thy love, to adore thy grace, and trust in thy merits; that being grounded on thee, the rock of our salvation, we may build up ourselves on our most holy faith, by doing the will of our heavenly Father, and find mercy in the great day, through thee our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XV.

ST. MATTHEW, viii. 1.

GREAT multitudes followed him. — Were they athirst for more such discourses? Whatever they felt upon the occasion, this one is enough to give us all aching hearts. If it should, we shall never find our remedy but in following *him.*

Ver. 2. *And behold there came a leper and worshipped him.*—How he worshipped him, the next words will tell us.

— *Saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* — Ascribing to him divine honour and divine power. He was sure he *could* cleanse him, and with an humble faith hoped he *would;* but had some doubt from a sense of his unworthiness. Let thy faith be as humble as thou wilt, but never question either his power or goodness. The leprosy was a most loathsome distemper in that country. Art thou ignorant of a much worse leprosy cleaving to thy soul? Look back to the sermon

on the mount. Wouldst thou know thy physician? Look here.

Ver. 3. *And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him.*—Whom none else were to touch, on pain of being unclean themselves. Behold the true picture of our pollution in sin, and of his compassionate heart towards us. So foul and abominable are we; so ready is he to put forth his helping hand, and so powerful is the touch of it for our cleansing. Vile man! Blessed Jesus—! is the sum of all Scripture.

—*Saying, I will, be thou clean.*—"I will," is a sweet word, when we are burthened with sin, and, under a sense of guilt, come to him for remission. And, "be thou clean," is as certainly said to us as it was to the leper. In this comfort I desire to live and die; and am sure that if the faith of it does not turn us to God in love and obedience, nothing else will.

Ver. 4. *Offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*—So long as the Jewish ordinances were in force, he would have a due regard paid to them. And it was to be a testimony to them, not only of the leprosy being cured, but of the person by whom it was cured; that, considering this instance of his power, they might be led to the acknowledgment of him. Which consists very well with his saying to the leper, *see thou tell no man*, and is agreeable to his conduct at other times. The miracle must be known in some degree, or else it would fail of its main end, as being wrought to prove that he was the Christ: and he would not have it noised too much abroad, lest the people should make a wrong use of it, as he knew they would be ready to do, by declaring for his temporal kingship, which would have been of pernicious consequence to them, as well as to his doctrine and true character, and which, therefore, he was studious to avoid.

Ver. 5. *There came unto him a centurion.* — A Roman officer, but a friend to the Jewish nation and religion, as we read, Luke, vii. And there are two things observable in his character, his tender concern for his servant, and undoubting faith in Jesus.

Ver. 6. *Sick of the palsy.* — Apply what you hear with prayer for yourselves. If you do not think of your own disability, and where *your* palsy is, what is this story of the centurion's servant — what is Jesus himself, to you?

Ver. 7. *And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.* — He knew what he said, and that there would be no occasion for his going; but chose his words on purpose to draw such an answer from the centurion as would make his faith more remarkable, and a pattern to all believers. The desiring soul, knowing its want of help, and where it is to be had, can make the necessary change in the words, and hears Jesus saying, I will come and heal *thee.*

Ver. 8. *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.* — "Lord, I am not worthy," is saying all. This self-knowledge, and self-emptiness, as certainly brings Christ into the soul with all his power and love, as it engaged him to grant the centurion's request; but he cannot come under the same roof with the pride of self-sufficiency.

Ver. 9. "*For I am a man under authority.*" — He did not doubt but Christ's word of command would be as readily obeyed as his own was by all under him. What! in the case of a palsy? Yes, in every thing; for *thy* cure, though ever so difficult in thy own eyes.

Ver. 10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled,* &c. — He expressed his admiration of the centurion's faith openly, for the benefit and instruction of all, that we might know exactly what faith is, and the never-failing efficacy of it,

viz. a full persuasion of his power and will to be all to us, and do all for us that we want, and absolute trust in him for that purpose.

Ver. 11. *And I say unto you that many shall come from the east,* &c.— From all parts of the world, in the power of a true faith, or reliance on Christ for remission and renovation; and the first in order to the second. But how can this faith ever spring up in the soul, if we deny, or lessen our guilt, and put our own ability to recover ourselves in his stead?

Ver. 12. *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.*— The Jews then, we now, if we, like them, want the only thing which can gain us admission into it. The children of the kingdom cast out! Is it so much as possible that any such should be lost for ever, and consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth? But how should it be otherwise with all who see no want of Christ, and never were in fear for themselves? Many who call themselves Christians, are utterly ignorant of him, and as unconcerned about their salvation by him, as the heathens.

Ver. 13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*— Did Christ intend the benefit of these words only for him to whom he spoke them? Have *we* no right in the son of David, no interest in this precious saying? Let us not diminish our portion in the Scripture, for the words belong to us, and were spoken alike to all. Dost thou want forgiveness? Dost thou hunger and thirst after righteousness? Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the anointed of God and thy Jesus, mighty to save? As thou believest, so will it be done unto thee. The grace of this word will infallibly be made good to every soul that flies to it. On the other hand, is thy sin no burthen to thee? Hast thou only a faint desire of

holiness? And is thy help for the most part in thyself? As thou believest, so will it be done unto thee. Thou shalt be left to stand or fall by thyself.

— *And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.*—As, upon hearing the words, he believed he would. From this passage we may learn what faith is. It is an earnest desire of Christ's benefits, and firm trust in him for them, from a sense of our perishing state, and his readiness to help us. Nothing short of this can be accounted faith, and it need not be any thing more. Some are very positive that it cannot be saving, unless it is a particular, personal assurance of an interest in Christ, given to the soul of the believer: but now observe, if the centurion had answered, "Lord, it is not enough to hear thee speak the word, I must also have an inward revelation, or immediate testimony of the Spirit, that it will be as thou hast said," would not this have been a horrible affront and indignity offered to Christ? The *word of Scripture*, therefore, is sufficient ground for believing, and the faith which is built upon it, by the divine assistance, is undoubtedly scriptural and saving.

LECTURE.

THE gospels are the history of the birth, actions, miracles, discourses, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus; and we are expressly told by St. John for what end these things were written, viz. "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name." Then surely what is thus written for our instruction, must be read, understood, and applied; it is for the life of our souls, and in the neglect, ignorance, or disbelief of it, we lose our portion in the Son of God. His name was called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. Sin is death, and salvation from

it is life, and none but he could save us from the guilt and curse of our sins: but whom does he save? Who are his people? Not all, nor the greatest part of those who are baptized in his name, and call him Lord; not the careless and unawakened, who never were convinced of sin, know nothing of the evil of their state and nature, believe nothing of the danger and misery of it, and have not been stirred up to seek deliverance from it. Jesus is nothing to them, as they feel no want, they desire no help, and what they read or hear of him makes no impression upon their hearts. Come, my brethren, let us be the Lord's people in faith and understanding, let us be the redeemed of Jesus. Read, and consider, and pray over the Scripture, that you may know what he is, and what you are, what he has done for you, and what life and death is, that you may attain to the one and escape the other. I am endeavouring, as God shall enable me, to help you in the understanding of Scripture, and calling upon you to know the things which belong to your everlasting peace: let me not always speak to you in vain; let not what I am now doing be a witness against you at the day of judgment, that you would not hear and be converted.

How have you profited? What have you gained by the chapters we have already gone through? In particular, when you heard our Lord's sermon on the mount, did it awaken no serious thought; cause no searchings of heart concerning your state; bring you to no resolution of knowing more of him; and especially of putting yourselves into his hands for the life you want, for the remission of your sins in his blood, and the blessedness of a new will to live unto God according to his teaching? When he had finished it, the hearers, it is said, were astonished, and that great multitudes followed him. They were struck with the authority of his teaching, the power of truth, and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and, we may-

suppose, were desirous of hearing more such discourses from him. And yet at that time they knew but very imperfectly who and what he was, and in what respects he was to be a Saviour to them. We have the advantage of knowing that he came into the world to die for us, to make our peace with God by bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, to restore us to the hope of heaven, and qualify us for it. Oh! let us follow him, hungering and thirsting after his heavenly doctrines and instructions. Let us apply what we read to our own case, by seeing *ourselves* in all those who came to him for healing, and a full belief of his power and will to help and to save us. Theirs were bodily diseases; ours are of a worse kind, deadly to the soul; but the Jesus whom we are reading of is mighty to save, and has healing in his name and nature, and every miracle he wrought is a pledge and assurance of our own recovery, points him out to us as sent of God for our relief, and was written on purpose to engage our trust and confidence in him as our all-sufficient helper. I shall have frequent occasion to remind you of this, as the great use we are to make of his miracles of healing; for every one of them says to every one of us, you are diseased, you are in a perishing condition, you must have help or be undone, and here is the very help and the very person you want; come to Jesus in the faith of his being appointed of God, and having all power to save you. For instance, what can it signify to us to hear of his healing the leprosy, if we do not turn our eyes inward to see the leprosy of an evil heart and evil nature in ourselves, and at the same time look to Jesus for our cleansing? The leprosy was a loathsome distemper in that country, and incurable by human means; but was cured immediately by the word and touch of Jesus. Do thou come to him with a true feeling of thy distemper, thy inveterate and more loathsome plague of sin; do thou worship him, and say to him with the same humble faith,

"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and thou mayest conclude, on the warrant of what thou here readest, that his word is as powerful for thy healing, and his heart as ready to supply all thy wants. Again, art thou daunted at thy weakness, seeing thyself utterly disabled? Know thy Lord is not; the sickness, the *death* of thy soul is nothing to him; look at the centurion's faith: say, as he did, "speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed," and the word *is* here spoken; behold, it is here, written in the book, and appointed of God for thy comfort—"go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Thou needest not to have it spoken to thy soul by a particular testimony; it may or may not, as God pleases; believe God, believe the word, give but the same credit to the word of God as thou wouldest to the word of an honest man; believe that thou art helpless and undone in thyself, and come to Jesus for his salvation upon the call of God in Scripture, and thy faith will save thee. It will be the joy of thy heart to know that thou art safe in him from all thy fears of condemnation; and the prayer of thy heart to live unto him that died for thee, and show thy love to him by keeping his commandments.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Lord, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved. Thou hast given unto us thy blessed Son to help and to save us, to wash us from our sins in his own blood, and to cure all the diseases of our souls; and thou hast caused his miracles of healing to be recorded, that all generations might trust in his grace and power: bring us to him, we beseech thee, in a humbling sense of our want of him. Discover to us, O thou Searcher of hearts, the charge that is against us; let thy Spirit convince us of sin, as the leprosy which cleaves to our natures, and how loathsome we are in

it, that we may fly to the remedy which thou hast provided for us, and adore thy mercy. Thou seest that we are utterly disabled, and have neither strength nor the will to help ourselves; raise up thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us. Open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace, and stir us up effectually to seek after them. Bless the reading of thy word to us, and make it our guide to Jesus; that, knowing him to be the way, the truth, and the life, we may come unto thee by him, gladly receive thy covenant of grace, glorify thee by our lives, and when we die be received into thy everlasting kingdom of glory, for his sake, and through his merits, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XVI.

St. Matthew, viii. 15.

And she arose, and ministered unto them.—We may be sure, with alacrity and great gratitude. This is the way he takes with us all. What shall we not do in the belief of his love?

Ver. 16. *They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils,* &c.—This is always doing in the world; he is always casting out devils. Say not, "thou hast no devil;" when deep-rooted aversion to God, pride, wrath, envy, and other diabolical tempers, have possession of thy soul.

—*He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick*—That we might be convinced of his power, and in the belief of this word come to him with

our own sicknesses. The Scripture is all light, or all dark, as we do, or do not see ourselves in it.

Ver. 17. *Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.*—He must take, and bear them; they defy all the skill of man. We may well stand amazed, and are for ever indebted to him, that he would take and bear them with sympathy and painful suffering. And his bearing is healing, his taking is taking away.

Ver. 18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*—Did he withdraw from his work? no; but from their mistaken apprehensions of him, as a temporal king, and because he would not bring reproach upon himself, by giving the least countenance to their tumultuous proceedings.

Ver. 19. *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*—It was well said, if the heart had been right. But the answer shows he did not think of following Christ *for Christ*, but for the world.

Ver. 20. *The foxes have holes*, &c.—Giving him to understand that he was not what he took him for, and had none of those things to bestow which he hoped to gain by following him.

—*But the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*—The Son of man, and the Son of God too; that by this union the human nature might be exalted to a participation of the Godhead. Behold the great abasement of the greatest of all the sons of men! and how powerfully it preaches lowliness to grandeur, and contentment to poverty.

Ver. 21. *Suffer me first to go and bury my father*—Either then dead, or to stay till his death. It was a plausible pretence; but this doing something else first, ruins us; and if we have an excuse for not coming to

Christ now, it is to be feared we shall die with one a our mouths.

Ver. 22. *Let the dead bury their dead.*—Christ, you se, speaks a different language from the world. In is account, not only the deceased, but the dead to lod and their souls, are the dead.

—*Follow thou me.*—As we all should, for the reason ere intimated, because we are dead without him.

Ver. 26. *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*—Considering what they had seen, and knew of him, hey should have concluded, against all appearances, hat they were safe whilst he was in the ship with hem. Let his servants be warned by this rebuke. They re but too apt to dishonour him, destroy their own peace nd hinder their progress, by their desponding fears.

—*He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and here was a great calm.*—When your doubts are up, nd run mountains high, think you see him in the ery action and posture of rebuking the winds and he sea.

Ver. 27. *What manner of man is this?*—Blessed are ve, when we can say this from our own experience of is power in us. And we do not believe in him at ll, if we do not believe in him for this very end.

Ver. 28. *Two possessed with devils, coming out of the ombs, exceeding fierce,* &c.—In the mischievous dispoition, madness, despair, and blasphemy of these possessed vith the devils, hell is as it were naked before us. How lreadful to think this may be our condition!

Ver. 29. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?*—They knew what they said, and that e did not come to help *them*. Blessed be God, he ame to deliver *us* from their power and malice. But vhat less in effect do all those say, who prefer their usts to him, refuse his help, and despise his salvation?

Ver. 29. *Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*—The day of judgment. They know their sufferings are not yet at the highest, and think of the time with dread and horror. They are here preaching to us. What is your choice from this day forward? will you follow Christ, or go with them into their place of torment?

Ver. 32. *And he said unto them, Go.*—Better any where than in man. But why must the owners of the swine suffer this loss? It is a sufficient answer to say, that Christ saw it fit. We all know who sends calamities, and for what end: and why then should this, more than other instances of the same nature, be thought a reflection on divine goodness?

Ver. 34. *Besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*—The miracle wrought no effect among them. They preferred their swine to his presence and teaching.

Good Lord, deliver us from the dreadful guilt of saying, What have we to do with thee? Thou tookest on thee the seed of Abraham, and camest in great pity to heal and help us, to rescue and to save us, to cleanse us from the defilement of sin, and restore the decayed powers of our natures, and without the grace of thy redemption we perish. Grant us so perfectly to believe in thee, that, renouncing all self-dependence, and trusting only in thy help, we may follow thee without delay, as the life of our souls, and by thy mighty aid be defended in all dangers, and against all the enemies of our salvation.

LECTURE.

We are reading of Jesus, and his miracles come thick upon us. Who is Jesus, and why were these things written? what is it to us to hear, as we have done in this chapter, of his curing the leprosy, the palsy, the fever, speaking the winds and sea into a calm, and casting out devils with his word? Jesus, you know, is the Son of God, born into our flesh to redeem it from the curse it was under, to take away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, and to purge our natures from the power of sin, by turning our hearts and wills to God in obedience. And his mighty works, as they are a full proof of his being sent of God on the great design of helping, redeeming, and saving lost mankind, so they are a call to every one of us to receive him in that capacity. Have you no need of him? do you intend to reap no benefit by him? did God never put it into your hearts to say, I am sick of a deadly distemper, I have a worse plague cleaving to me than any that I read of, and must go to Jesus for healing? Then you are blind to your sin; you are without faith and without hope; you lose your baptism; all your worshipping of God in the name of Christ, whatever else you are or do, is in vain; and if you die in this condition, you perish. Observe, therefore, what conversion is, and how you come to the faith of Jesus, and to a state of salvation by him. If you were sick of a bodily distemper, and knew you had an infallible Physician to go to, you would put yourselves into his hands without delay. And why would you do this, but because you felt your sickness, and would gladly be eased of the pain and trouble of it? Well, Jesus is not here to take our infirmities, and bear our sicknesses, in

this sense; he is not now present to say to the leper, I will, be thou clean,—to heal the palsy, or rebuke a raging fever; but, nevertheless, he *is* always present with his compassionate heart to do much greater things for us, to make us whiter than snow in his blood, to strengthen the decayed powers of our nature, to calm the violence of our passions, to change the vicious bent of our affections, to purge out our corruption, and subdue those lusts by which the devil keeps possession of us. This is our business with him, this we all certainly want from him, and this he wants to do for us; for his great aim in all the miracle he wrought was to turn our eyes to him as the Physician of the soul, to convince us of our need of healing, and of his power and will to help us to the uttermost. Let your consciences speak; let your hearts tell you, whether you ever came to him for this purpose, knowing yourselves to be in an evil case, and that none but he can work your deliverance. For just in proportion to the feeling of your own plague, to the knowledge you have of your death in sin, will be your turning to him, faith and trust in him. If you have been in pain for yourselves, from the discovery of your danger and misery in sin, it will be glad tidings to you, and the joy of your souls, to hear of Jesus, carrying salvation in his name, manifesting his power, healing all manner of diseases, to engage your trust and confidence in him for your own cure, and never rejecting any who came to him for help. If you feel your burden, you will long to be eased of it; if you know your own sore, you can lay your hand upon it, and tell him of it, and upon the warrant of every miracle you read of you may depend upon him for relief; but if you do not, if you deny your sin, or make light of it, or think all is well with you, because, perhaps, you are not open sinners, how can you come to him for his healing;

how can you persuade yourselves that you believe in him; what can you say to him; what have you to do with him? You see then that conversion is the soul's turning to Christ, under a sense of its helpless, undone state in sin; just as they came to him when he was upon earth with their bodily diseases, knowing their condition, and imploring relief; and faith is trusting in him to be all to us, and do all for us, that we want, and truly desire. It is a dreadful thing to say, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? but we do say it in effect, keep ourselves from him in unbelief, and can make no account of his salvation, so long as we are ignorant of our want of him. When our eyes are opened to see our sin and condemnation, then we can come to him in faith and longing for his benefits, for pardon and all manner of cleansing; and then he who cured the leprosy, the palsy, rebuked the winds and the sea, and cast out devils, Jesus the Son of God, is ready for us. The Lord prepare us for him!

PRAYER.

Blessed God, who gavest thy only begotten Son to take our infirmities, and bear our sicknesses; bring us to him as the Physician of our souls, and give us grace to adore and bless thee for thy great mercy. He who cast out the evil spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick, is the same Jesus for ever, and has the same compassionate heart towards his needy creatures: Lord, make us sensible, that without him we perish; take from us all blindness and hardness of heart, deliver us from all our vain excuses, and enable us to follow him without delay; that in the sense and happy experience of his benefits, and for joy of his salvation, we may devote ourselves to his service. Our sins are many, our corruption is strong, and our hearts

are ready to fail us; but, O Lord, whenever we are sinking under a sense of our guilt and weakness, strengthen our faith and rebuke our fears; turn our eyes to the grace and might of Jesus, and bring this word seasonably to our remembrance,—What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him? Even so, O Lord, by him our Saviour and mighty Deliverer, calm all the unruly passions of our souls, defend us from the power and malice of the devil, confirm us in thy peace, and in the truth of a pure obedience; hear our prayers, and accept us for his sake, Jesus Christ, our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XVII.

St. Matthew, ix. 2.

They brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.—This is mentioned to show how utterly disabled he was, and to magnify the power of Christ in his cure. We want it no less, and shall experience it no less, if we apply to him under a sense of our miserable impotence, as the paralytic did. For no doubt he was brought to him at his own desire, and in faith of relief from him. Observe again what faith is, and what it will do for us. It is trust in Christ, and the soul's going out of itself to him for help in all its needs; and to this faith help is never denied. You were brought to him in baptism; but when did you bring yourselves to him for renewed forgiveness, and strength to perform the vow that was then made in your names?

—*And Jesus, seeing their faith*—Of the man, and those who brought him. This he *must* see in us.

— *Said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*—This was a great deal more than

he expected; but what we all want from the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shows him to *us* in his better capacity, and proper office of Physician of the soul. No restoration to spiritual health but by faith in him for the remission of sins.

Ver. 3. *This man blasphemeth.*—Woe be to us if he does not do for us what the Scribes thought it blasphemy in him to pretend to.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus, knowing their thoughts.*—He knows every thought of *your* hearts and *mine*, every moment of our lives; and as the root and guilt of sin is there, there he looks for it. Now see what you have done for yourselves, when you have polished only your outsides. If you would know yourselves in some measure as he does, take his rule into your hands. Never lose sight of the sermon on the mount.

Ver. 5. *For whether is easier to say*, &c.—One was as easy to him as the other; and he here leads us to the root of all our bodily disorders. We cannot be mistaken in supposing it to be sin, and should be warned by them to make diligent search into ourselves for it. Not that we have any warrant to conclude from hence, that men are greater or less sinners, as they are, or are not afflicted in their bodies.

Ver. 6, 7. *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.*—The first time Christ said, "thy sins be forgiven thee;" the second time he said, "arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Now mark the consequence of forgiveness: it restores us to a power of working, and sets us free to do the will of God.

Ver. 8. *The multitude, &c. glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*—You now hear this, that you may *glorify* God for his power in *you*.

Ver. 9. *Sitting at the receipt of custom.*—In a way of great gain; and yet at the call of Christ he was divorced from it in a moment. Behold the miracles wrought upon the soul; and think it not less than any other you read of.

—*And he arose and followed him.*—Lord, speak thy word with power into the depth of our souls, and we shall follow thee. Farewell all such love of the world as would keep us from Christ!

Ver. 10. *Publicans and sinners sat down with him.*—He is still the same condescending Jesus, and, sinners as we are, always ready to admit us into his presence. If men do not think themselves too good to come to him, he thinks none too bad.

Ver. 11. *And when the Pharisees saw it.*—The Pharisees were pretenders to great strictness, conceited of their own righteousness, and, defective as it was, trusted in it for salvation; which of all things is the most contrary to Christ and his Gospel. And therefore he, who at other times was all mildness, censured them as severely as they did others; detecting upon all occasions their hypocrisy, pride, and self-ignorance, and admonishing the people to beware of them.

—*Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?*—Meaning that they themselves were not sinners, and that he disgraced himself by eating with them. Hast thou nothing of this disposition, no lofty opinion of thy own virtue, no proud disdain of poor sinners, as if they were beneath thy notice, and their company would be a stain to thy purity?

Ver. 12. *They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick.*—Sin then, in the judgment of Christ, is sickness; and a deadly one too, if he does not take it away. But who are they that are so whole as to have no need of him? I appeal to your own conscience whether it be your-

self. Are you then come to him with your sickness, and are you in his hands for a cure, trusting in his skill, and following his directions, as you would in the case of a dangerous bodily distemper?

Ver. 13. *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.*—Sacrifice was a prescribed part of their worship, and not to be omitted. The meaning is, that mercy, or compassion to the souls and bodies of men, is by far the most acceptable worship we can pay to God, and that in the want of it no other is of any value.

—*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*—Here again ask your own hearts whether you are of the number of those who strictly need no repentance, if there be any such. The truth is, all have need of him, but those only obtain healing from him, who feel their distemper, and know their want of him. The self-righteous, who say in the pride of their hearts, "why eateth your master with publicans and sinners," must for ever be what they are, that is, absolutely unrighteous, except they come to a better knowledge of themselves.

Ver. 14. *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*—Probably, those who asked the question had a very high opinion of themselves for their fasting. He answers them, that all times are not alike proper for it, nor all persons alike capable of it.

Ver. 15. *The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*—They will act unsuitably to their circumstances, if they do not.

Ver. 16. *No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment.*—So old and tender, as not to bear a piece of new stiff cloth.

Ver. 17. *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles.*—Bottles made of skins, which, if old, would burst, instead of stretching with the new fermenting liquor: signifying by both instances, that his disciples were yet but in a weak

state, and must not have too much imposed upon them. Not that they were always to continue weak. Fasting is not here denied, and at other times is supposed by Christ to be a duty, has the example of all ages, and all holy persons, to recommend it, and will be found a proper means to confirm and quicken us in our Christian progress, when used for right ends—to conquer our appetites, wean our hearts from the world, examine and humble ourselves, and draw nigh to God. Bodily infirmities may be an exemption; but let every man be sincere with himself.

LECTURE.

You have heard to-day how our Lord said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Surely, these were sweet words to him; as they will be to us all, whenever we can persuade ourselves upon true grounds that they belong to us. If there is any thing that we should wish for more than another, it is to be loosed from the bond of our sins, to be at peace with God, and have rejoicing in our consciences from a sense of forgiveness. Do you want it, or do you not? You will say, yes, all do. Do you desire it? You think you do. But do you really desire it from a certain knowledge that you are undone without it, believing that it is to be had only in Christ, and willing to come to it in the way of his appointing? When he said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee, we are told moreover that he said it, "seeing their faith." Then the matter is plain, if we had no other direction in all Scripture concerning the great point upon which our salvation turns—it is faith. Faith brings us to Christ, faith receives him, faith makes Christ ours, with all its benefits, "by grace we are saved, through faith." But what brings us to faith? What

brought the paralytic to him but the knowledge of his distemper? What can bring any of us to him but like knowledge of him and ourselves? I mean our sin, which is the plague we are all sick of, and sure to perish by, without relief. God be praised, we have the remedy offered to us. We are reading of Jesus, that blessed name for sinners; and the Gospels were written on purpose to tell us who he is, what need we have of him, and what he will do for us. He did not come into the world only to cure diseases, and cast devils out of the bodies of men; but he thereby proved himself to be sent of God to help and to save lost mankind at all times, and in all places, you and me. There is not a man or woman here present, but may have the full benefit of him for their souls, and be assured of his power and gracious heart to help and deliver them, let their case be ever so desperate. And we hear him preached, and read of him in vain, if we do not come to him every one of us for ourselves, with a sense of our want of him, and belief of his power and will to succour us. We cannot be more helpless and more incurable by human means, than the man who had the palsy; and yet the word of Jesus not only restored him to perfect soundness in his body, but spake life and health into his soul, by pronouncing the forgiveness of his sins. What do you think upon hearing this? Is not this that Jesus who came to seek and to save us all, and died to purchase the forgiveness of our sins? Are not these glad tidings? Is not this the very person we all want? Why then do you not come to him? What can be the reason of this dead coldness and unconcern about your interest in him and salvation by him? Why, "he came to call sinners to repentance;" you hear him saying to all, "You must repent;" you must know your sin; you must see yourselves undone by it; you must lay it down at the foot of the cross, and resolve never to take it up again; you must come to him to be washed

from the guilt of it in his blood, and put yourselves into his hands for strength against it. Think what you please, this is the way of coming to faith in him appointed by himself, and if you turn yourselves into ever so many shapes to avoid it, he will never appoint another; you must of all necessity feel so much of your disease, as to make you glad of a cure, before you can come to him for it. And now you see the reason of your slighting the offer he makes you of himself, and why you neither really desire nor believe in him. The word repentance frightens you from him. Precious as he is, you like your sins better; you prefer your present state, unsafe as it is, to his humbling knowledge and strict discipline, though it is for salvation; if you have something of a smooth, civil life to plead, and can justify yourselves before men, you look no farther; you never think what you are in the sight of God, and in this ignorance of yourselves turn over the rough work of repentance to the vilest of mankind.

My brethren, do not continue in darkness all your lives, know your sin, be in pain for yourselves, be in earnest with Jesus, do not lose your right and happy portion in him, repent that you may believe in him, and that your faith may carry on and perfect the work of your repentance. He is worth ten thousand worlds; for who but he could say to the perishing soul, in the name of God, "Thy sins be forgiven thee?" He who died that he might say it, and paid the vast debt we owed with his blood to redeem us from everlasting death. *You* could not do this; we were all lost for ever for any thing we can do to help ourselves; but by the grace which is given us we can come to him for life. You have heard him now calling you to repentance, and you must comply with his call if ever you attain to his salvation. Only take notice that your repentance does not save you, but your faith; but

then, as I have already told you, repentance is the way to faith, and nothing else can bring you to it. If you do not feel sin as your burden, you will never go to Christ to be eased of it. His method of bringing a soul home, is by convincing it of sin, fastening a charge of guilt upon it, and bringing it into straits. Then it can look to him for healing, and when it does, he has comfort for it; and this it is, here written in the word, and spoken to all who lay hold on it in faith, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Lord stir you up to seek after it, speak it to your hearts, and keep you faithful to his love in all holy obedience.

PRAYER.

All praise, all glory be to thee, O God, for the power thou hast given unto thy Son Jesus Christ, to loose us from the bond of our sins, to renew our strength, to put us in the way of eternal life, and enable us to walk in it. Let thy word be surely believed among us, that the desire of our souls may be to his name, and that in the faith of his precious blood-shedding, grace, and power, we may hear him saying to every one of us, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. Let thy Spirit convince us of our need of healing, that by the knowledge of our helpless condition in sin, we may be effectually stirred up to seek after deliverance. Deliver us from that pride of heart, and vain confidence of our being whole, which keeps us ignorant of our danger, and strengthens us in unbelief. Oh! turn our eyes and hearts to the great Physician whom we all want, who came into the world to cleanse us from our guilt, to purge out our corruption, to restore us to health and soundness, and redeem us from everlasting death. Let our sins bring us to repentance, and our repentance to Christ, and let our faith perfect our repentance. Thou who hast given Jesus to us, give us grace to

commit our souls to him; that rejoicing in his salvation, and living by his rule, we may be accepted through him, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XVIII.

St. Matthew, ix 18.

My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.—This was a high degree of faith, but not more than was necessary. When we are so far awakened as to see the exceeding greatness of our wants, past sinfulness, and present deadness, we are hard put to it to think there is a power and will in Jesus answerable to them. The Scripture, therefore, strives hard to keep up our belief in him, as every way sufficient for our case; and whatever it is, our faith must not come short of it. If the ruler had believed that he was able to cure the leprosy, or the palsy, but not to raise the dead, he must have gone without help.

Ver. 19. *And Jesus arose and followed him.*—No delay in Jesus. He is always thus ready, and waits only for the call of our faith.

Ver. 21. *For she said within herself, If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.*—Observe again; for it is of great moment to our peace, comfort, and restoration, what faith is; it is a sense of want, earnest desire of help, and application to Jesus for it, with a firm trust in his grace and power. As the ruler, and this woman, believed in him, and came to him for relief in their distress, so must we for our souls. And when we do thus come to him, we have no more reason to doubt of our faith, and all its saving effects, than we have of our wants.

Ver. 22. *He said, Daughter, be of good comfort.*—To one he says, "Son, be of good cheer;" to another, "Daughter, be of good comfort:" what gracious endearing language! Yes, Lord, thy forgiveness is cheering; thy healing is comfort; thy word assures it to us; thy Spirit settles us in it, and without it we shall never know peace.

Ver. 23. *And saw the minstrels and the people making a noise*—According to their custom at funerals.

Ver. 24. *He said unto them, Give place.*—They came to lament over the dead. There was no occasion for them.

—*For the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.*—She was not to continue in death, as they apprehended; and he therefore calls it a sleep, knowing that she would immediately awake from it.

Ver. 24. *And they laughed him to scorn*—Knowing that she was dead.

Ver. 26. *And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.*—The fame of Jesus is the ground of our belief in him; and we are now reading the history of him, written by St. Matthew, for that end. The first thing, therefore, to be considered, is, that no man could do such miracles except God was with him. The next is, for what end he was sent of God. But both these considerations will be ineffectual, unless a third is added, viz. what you desire he should do, and what he has done for *you*. The learned too often stop at the two first; it is happy for the poor that they may be as well grounded in the last, and have the benefit of it, as much as any.

LECTURE.

You have heard how the woman, who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Jesus,

and touched his garment, saying within herself, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole." Let us take these words a little into consideration, and, if it pleases God, get virtue out of them for ourselves. What forced her to look out for help? The knowledge and feeling of her distemper. What brought her to Jesus for help in her extremity? The belief and persuasion that he could, and would help her. And what engaged him to help and relieve her? Her faith. These two things then offer themselves to our consideration, with respect to the mortal disease we all labour under, I mean our sin, viz. self-knowledge, and coming to Jesus in faith for a cure. I say, we must know ourselves and our condition in sin; we must see our sin in the light of Scripture, as hateful to God, and exposing us to a sentence of condemnation; there must be no denying, hiding, or excusing of it; we must know clearly, every one of us for ourselves, that the guilt of it is upon us, and that, if it is not removed, we shall be undone for ever. More or less our danger and misery in sin, and the necessity of deliverance from it, must be discovered to us. As the Spirit of God begins his work here in the saving of a soul, here we must begin with ourselves, and have our eyes opened to see the charge which is against us, what sin is, and what we are in sin. This first step in our Christian progress is what the generality never come to; but trusting in their baptism, together with an outward civility, and quietness of behaviour, or what they call their good hearts and good meanings, live and die ignorant of their sin, or denying its deadly nature. And therefore it is that I press this point so earnestly upon you, and so often repeat it. I do not say how much, or how long you must feel and be troubled for your sin; but know it you must, before you can have a desire or will to be delivered from it.

Well, but we will suppose you have taken this first

step, and got so far on your way; that you feel sin in some measure as your plague and burden, believe what the Scripture tells you of your own sinfulness, and the damnableness of all sin, and would fain be rid of your fears; where will you go with it, and what will you do next? Your first thought will be to repent, and grow better as you can, in order to make your peace with God. So you must; but if you put your own repentings, your own resolutions, your own doings, in the place of Christ, you are as much out of the way as ever; and the more earnest you are in endeavouring to make yourselves whole by a law-work, the greater will be your trouble and distress, when you find, after repeated trials, that it is impossible. Poor soul! here is instruction and comfort for thee, and I am impatient to tell thee of it. Hast thou not heard of Jesus that he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, that he took it all up, and bore it in his own body on the cross? Go to him directly with thine, and tell him of it; every miracle he wrought is a pledge and assurance of his good-will towards thee; and on the warrant of this word thou mayest say boldly to thyself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole; he who raised the dead to life, will raise me from the worst of all deaths, and remove that curse of sin from my soul and body, which makes death terrible to think of. Let him see this faith in thee; let it be thy real belief, grounded on the word and promise of God, a thousand times repeated for thy assurance, that there is salvation in the name Jesus; that he came into the world to save sinners; has always the same compassionate heart towards them, and all power given him to save them to the uttermost; and I dare pronounce, on the authority of the word which thou hast now heard, if there was not another such in all Scripture, that the same faith which brought the woman to Christ, and was effectual for her healing, hath made thee

whole. Thou mayest say joyfully with the apostle, "being justified by faith," pardoned, cleared of sin, and the debt-book crossed, "we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and thou mayest depend upon it that thy coming to Jesus in thy extremity, and trusting in him when all other helps fail, is as much faith in thee, as true and saving, as it was in any of those who came to him to be healed of their diseases. Therefore get yourselves upon this rock; if you would be made whole, let Christ do it, for he only can. Nothing can wash out the foul stains of your sin but his blood; nothing can be a covering for your guilty souls but his righteousness; nothing can set you above your fears, and give ease to your troubled thoughts, when you are distressed for sin, and looking out every way for help, but what he has done and suffered for you. If you trust to any thing else for the healing of your consciences, you are miserably deceived; you reject the remedy of God's providing for you, and overthrow the whole Gospel. But make the Lord Jesus your confidence, and he will be your Saviour in all respects, to deliver you from the guilt, and strengthen you against the power of sin. When you know what it is to be saved by him, what an accursed thing sin is, and how much it cost him to purge it, you will fear nothing so much as to lose your interest in him. When you think yourselves perfect only in him, you will endeavour to be as holy as possible in yourselves, and give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. In obedience to his commands, in the love of his name, you will fight manfully against sin, continually mortifying all your evil and corrupt affections, daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living, and praying earnestly to be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who hast manifested thyself to the world in Jesus Christ, as the God and Father of mercies, and wouldest have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; let thy word be precious in our eyes, as the means which thou hast ordained to bring us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee, and do thou speak it to our hearts, and teach us by thy Spirit to adore and bless thee for thy great goodness. We have long been diseased, we are naturally dead in trespasses and sins; but thou, who didst deliver up thy own Son for us all, wilt also freely with him give us all things; faith to receive him, new hearts turned to thee, new wills to please thee, with the Spirit of grace and supplications to be established in thy covenant of peace, and kept safe to thy everlasting kingdom of glory. Raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us. Open our eyes, turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto thee, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, which is in Christ Jesus. If we may but touch the hem of his garment, we shall be whole; if we trust in any thing but him for the life of our souls, we deny the Lord that bought us, and our sin remaineth. Take from us all unbelief and hardness of heart, and bless what we have now heard to our instruction and comfort; that being convinced, by his mighty works, of his power to help and to save us, we may come to him for the miracle of our own healing, make him our strength and our confidence, be thy workmanship created in him unto good works, and find mercy through him, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XIX.

St. Matthew, ix. 27.

Two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.—It is our own case till he opens our eyes, and we have all as much cause as the two blind men had to cry out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." And he opens our eyes to see God, ourselves, and the nature of the world we live in; to see sin, and death for sin; to see our utter inability to help ourselves, and insufficiency for our own salvation; to see our absolute need of his forgiveness, and of being turned by him to God in holiness; to see heaven, or hell, at the end of our lives, and the wretched folly of continuing in the broad way of destruction.

Ver. 28. *The blind men came to him*—Knowing that they were blind, or else they would never have come to him.

—*And Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*—They knew they could not give sight to themselves, and believed assuredly that *he* could. There must be a concurrence of both these to a true faith. So far as we see no want of Christ, or trust in ourselves, or doubt of his power, we are given up to unbelief.

Ver. 29. *According to your faith be it unto you.*—So it will always be to the world's end, if there is any depending on what we are now reading.

Ver. 30. *And their eyes were opened.*—Are yours? If they are not, what can be the reason that you go without your remedy, and have not the same help from the same Jesus, but that you are blind, and will not see?

—*And Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that*

no man know it.—The reason why he would not have his miracles made too public, has already been given. The case is altered now; what we know of Jesus must not be concealed.

Ver. 31. *But they spread abroad his fame in all that country.*—It would have been very hard for them to hold their tongues. He had a reason for this command, though they knew it not. Obey him in the dark.

Ver. 33. *And the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.*—Think what use you are to make of this, and where you must look for yourselves.

Ver. 34. *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the devils through the prince of the devils.*—Those who are blind themselves will not own the work of God in others, do what they can to hinder the belief of it from spreading, and what they cannot deny, ascribe to any the most absurd cause.

Ver. 35. *And Jesus went about teaching—preaching—healing, &c.*—Blessed be God, he is teaching here, and now preaching to us; and we may hear his words of saving truth to as good effect as those who heard them from his own mouth. He stooped very low, took great pains, refused no sufferings, to bring the Gospel of the kingdom to us with all its grace; and wilt thou, O slothful dead soul! turn a deaf ear to his instructions, neglect the Bible, be ignorant of thyself, and never once think of thy own healing by him?

Ver. 36. *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, &c.*—He still sees his fainting, scattered sheep, with bowels of melting pity, knowing that when they are scattered from *him*, they are liable to perish. The whole passage is an affecting instance of his tender love of souls, an earnest call to the sheep to have pity on themselves by returning to him, and a loud call indeed to those, whose duty it is to labour for them.

Ver. 37. *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.*—Considering the greatness of the harvest, always few, if all laboured. Alas! how few do, with a measure of Christ's spirit, and a piercing sense of the miseries of mankind.

Ver. 38. *Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*—Then this prayer will be heard as well as others; and, if you were zealous for the success of the Gospel, or wished well to your own souls, it would not be forgotten.

O Jesus, Lord of the harvest, and thyself the pattern of all labourers, look in mercy on it and them*. Awaken them to observe, with deep attention, what multitudes are scattered from thee, and perishing for lack of knowledge; give them thy own bowels of compassion; hear their prayers, and make them the happy instruments of bringing many of their diseased fellow-creatures to thee for healing. And do thou, O blessed Lord, strengthen what is decayed in us; enable us to forsake all covetous desires of the world, that we may follow thee; raise us from the death of sin; open our eyes to see the mercy of our God, and our mouths to speak his praise; and gather us in one body to thyself, who art the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

LECTURE.

The Lord's harvest is souls; and very precious they are in his sight. He made them for himself, and when they were lost to him, and to the end of their creation,

* See a small tract, entitled, "A Letter from a Clergyman concerning the First Question in the Office for the ordaining of Deacons." Sold by J. Rivington, in St. Paul's Churchyard; and E. Withers, near Temple Bar.

by sin, he sent his own Son to redeem them. Redeemed they were by his blood; and the plenteousness of that harvest, which he directs us to pray for, and at the same time compassionately and affectionately prayed for himself, is known only to God. My brethren, his prayer reaches to the end of the world; and he then prayed for you as much as if you had been present and heard him speak the words, and mention every one of you by name. But if our own is not added to it, that we may grow up unto him a holy people, watered with his blood, and nourished by his Spirit; his teaching, his labours, his pity, his prayer, will be lost as to us, and we shall make no part of that glorious harvest which the angels, at the last day, will gather into his kingdom. Let me desire you, on occasion of this passage of Scripture, to observe what it was that affected the heart of Jesus, and drew out all its compassion; it was to see a multitude of reasonable creatures, immortal souls, fainting for want of their proper food, scattered from God, and perishing in ignorance and sin. Then the conclusion is evident; we must, of all necessity, be recovered out of this state. You know what it cost him, what pains he took, and what sufferings he endured, to bring us back to his fold; and would to God you knew, and felt in your hearts, what danger you run, and what misery you are in, till you do return to it. Are you in it? If you are, what brought you into it? Your baptism? But what value do you set upon it, and how have you kept it? If you had never been baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, into the hope of salvation by Jesus, would you come to this baptism without delay, knowing what he is, what you are, and what you desire he should do for you? Do you believe, indeed, that you are bought with his blood; that, according to your calling and profession, you might rejoice before

God for the mercy of your deliverance from the curse of sin, and show your thankfulness to him by an unfeigned, lively obedience? Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding. You call yourselves Christians, and a blessed name it is; but why will you think and call yourselves so without Christian knowledge and belief? Why do you take refuge in your ignorance, and plead it as your excuse, supposing that Christian doctrine is too high a matter for the man of business, or the day-labourer, and requires more time and pains than you can possibly spare from your employments? Certainly, Christ was of another mind, when, seeing the multitudes, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all together, he expressed his concern for them, sent forth labourers to work in his harvest, as you will hear in the next chapter, to publish his Gospel, to carry his truth into all the world, and charged us at all times to pray for more. What were they to labour for, but "to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light?" And what better are you for the preaching and labours of any, if you live and die in ignorance of what they are ordained to teach and to preach for your instruction, belief, and salvation?

"God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" the meaning is, *by* coming to the knowledge of the truth, believing what is told us of the grace of God in Christ, receiving him into our hearts as the Saviour of mankind; and assuring ourselves, on the evidence of his miracles, written and recorded for this purpose, that we shall be helped by him to the utmost of our wants. Can you then hope to see the salvation of God, can you have a prayer for it, can you possibly put yourselves in the way to it, when you know little or nothing of its nature, design, and great benefit? Sabbath after sabbath, Christ

and his glad tidings are sounded in your ears; and if you were to be asked a reason of the hope that is in you, which, according to St. Peter, all Christians should be ready to give, you would fly to your good meanings, plead want of learning, say something or other to justify yourselves, and be utterly at a loss for a right answer. But let me beseech you not to sit down contented with your ignorance, nor ground yourselves upon a dark belief, when you neither understand what you want Christ for, nor what Christian salvation is. His light is not only as general, but as open to every eye, as the light of the sun; and, if you do not receive it, and rejoice in it, and use it to the end for which it was given, it is because you wilfully shut your eyes against it. Persons of more leisure, or superior learning, may know many things concerning the religion of the Bible, which you neither do, nor are required to know; but, I will venture to say, have no advantage over you in respect of saving knowledge, which lies in a little compass, and is summed up by Christ himself in two words, Repent and believe. On the contrary, if it is matter of absolute necessity for all to submit their understandings to the light of revelation, and receive the kingdom of God as little children, the lower part of mankind, as having no pride of learning, or acquired prejudices to renounce, are better prepared than others to receive what is taught them on the authority of God, have fewer hinderances in the way of their salvation, and can, with less self-denial, assent to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel; as in fact they did at the first preaching of it, and Christ intimates they would, when "he thanks God for revealing them (with effect) to babes, and hiding them from the (worldly) wise and prudent." You can feel your disease; you can know your sin; you can cry for mercy; you can

ask yourselves why Christ died; when you hear of his opening the eyes of the blind, you can beg of him to open yours; you can pray for faith, and grace to do the will of God according to his teaching; and who can do more? Depend upon it, the same God, who made you for his glory with the rest of your fellow-creatures, and gave you bodies of the same use and beauty, and souls as dear to him, and as capable of his operations, both can and will redeem you to himself by the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. In a word, it is the heart where God performs his wonders of grace; and, when you know this, and that he only can speak peace to it, change and renew it, you know all. Your work, as Christians, is now before you, which is upon the call of God, in his word, to put yourselves into his hands, that he may fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his will, give you to Christ, dwell in you by his Spirit, and preserve you in the way of obedience to his everlasting kingdom in heaven.

PRAYER.

Lord, look upon us in mercy, and gather us to thyself. Send forth, we beseech thee, labourers into thy harvest, enlightened with the saving truths of the Gospel, faithful ministers of the word, burning with the love of souls, and animated with a holy zeal for thy glory. Send them forth in the name of Jesus, and let the sense of redeeming mercy rule in their hearts, dwell upon their tongues, and shine bright in their lives. Support them with a mighty power of thy Spirit, bless their endeavours, and make them the happy instruments of enlarging thy kingdom, and bringing many sons and daughters unto glory. Grant that all may receive thy word with the simplicity of little children, and be guided by it into the knowledge and love of the truth, as it is in Jesus. Work the wonders of thy grace in every place, in every heart: so will we sing and praise thy

power; thankfully acknowledging the great things thou hast done for us, and humbly beseeching thee to keep us steadfast in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may hope unto the end, live in thy peace, die in thy favour, and be received into thy glory, for the sake and through the alone merits of the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XX.

St. Matthew, x. 1.

And when he had called his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, &c.—He never took this power away. They still have it for *us;* and it is our own fault if they are not, under *him*, the instruments of our conversion. Hear, and read what they say; and say to thyself, this is their medicine from Christ for my sickness. Lord, help me to understand and apply it.

Ver. 2. *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these.*—Whatever the world may think, these are the greatest names, and the most worthy to be had in honour, of any that ever were in the world.

Ver. 4. *Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*—Was Christ mistaken in Judas? Or is his choice of him a lesson of instruction to the people, to respect the *office* of his ministers; and to ministers, to take heed that they also be not his betrayers, and worst enemies?

Ver. 5. *These twelve Jesus sent forth.*—To preach the gospel with the hazard of their lives; and some of them he appointed to commit it to writing for the benefit of all posterity. You do not read this portion of Scripture as you ought, if you are not thankful to Jesus for them, and for bringing you to the knowledge of salvation by them.

Whatever truth you hear from others, they have it from them as the apostles had from Christ.

Ver. 5. *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.*—If Christ had said so of this place, "Preach not the gospel there!"—let not the sun shine, nor rain come upon it, would not have been near so great a curse. Bring it not upon yourselves, by rejecting the great blessing of the gospel when it is offered you.

Ver. 6. *But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*—"Lost," notwithstanding outward privileges, and then more especially in a very corrupt state. So may Christians, with all their advantages; and the less we know ourselves to be lost, the more cause we have to fear it.

Ver. 7. *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*—Not God's kingdom of glory in heaven, for as to us it is not come yet; but that kingdom, in which he reigns over us by Jesus Christ, forgives our sins, adopts us into his family, and prepares us for his everlasting kingdom in heaven; and if we do not enter into it now, we shall not hereafter.

Ver. 8. *Heal the sick*, &c.—The power he gave to them, he has superabundantly in himself for our healing; and he is our Jesus only so far as we own him for that end. If his chief design had been to do good to the bodies of men in the short course of his ministry, he needed not to have come into the world, nor sent his apostles to them.

Ver. 8. *Freely ye have received, freely give.*—The blessings of those powers I now commit to you.

Ver. 9, 10. *Provide neither gold*, &c.—*For the workman is worthy of his meat*—That is, spend no time in providing much or little, you have none to bestow upon it, go immediately about your proper business. It may be argued from hence, that ministers should have a maintenance

found to their hands, that they may be at leisure to attend singly upon their work. And when they have, what will they allege for not devoting themselves wholly to it?

Ver. 11. *Inquire who in it is worthy.*—Well disposed; given to hospitality, and worthy of so great a favour as that of entertaining Christ's messengers.

—*And there abide till ye go thence.*—Contented with such entertainment as you find there.

Ver. 12. *And when ye come into an house, salute it.*—By wishing peace to it, which was the Jewish salutation. He does not mean in the way of an empty civility, but with the offer of *his* peace.

Ver. 13. *And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it.*—The peace you carry in my name: it shall come upon it.

—*But if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.*—It shall return for your own reward, though slighted by those to whom it is offered. Lord, let none refuse it!

Ver. 14. *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet.*—As you would fire out of your bosoms, in token of their eternal rejection, for refusing your call. Shaking off the dust of their feet, was Christ's own act and deed by the apostles, and strongly expresses his abhorrence of all, who do not receive their message. My friends, I hope you do, and will receive it, and come here for that purpose.

Ver. 15. *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, &c.*—Still more dreadful is their condition, who slight repeated warnings, and live under the preaching of the gospel.

Ver. 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.*—Who would worry these poor sheep, and a multitude of others, for being eminently good, and, at the expense of life, showing them the only way to happiness. According to Christ's knowledge of us, *humanity*

is not the nature and character of *man*. The generality are grievously offended at this ugly representation of themselves, and take pride in an outward courtesy of manners, or acts of generosity; but who, almost, does not feel in himself more of the wolf than the lamb, when he is admonished, though ever so gently, to be better?

Ver. 16. *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*—Guard against ill usage, and be sure not to deserve it.

Ver. 17. *But beware of men.*—He does not mean that they were to desert their office for fear of them; but warns the disciples, and in them all others, of their danger; and, knowing that they would be fortified against it, does not scruple to paint it in its worst colours.

Ver. 19. *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak.*—As to the manner. The great thought must be to speak the truth, and to speak it boldly.

— *For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*—This will always be made good.

Ver. 20. *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*—From their inward sense, and steady assurance of divine things, the Spirit's work in them; and also by his present immediate assistance.

Ver. 21. *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death,* &c.—Religious quarrels, to the shame of mankind, are the fiercest of all others, so as to counteract some of the strongest workings of nature, and dissolve the ties of nearest kindred. Christendom has had its full share in the guilt of a persecuting spirit, and it is hardly ever enough abhorred.

Ver. 23. *When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.*—Not barely to escape, though that was lawful, but still to go on preaching.

— *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.*—Though they drive you out of one place, there will still be more left than you can well go through before their general destruction, the coming here spoken of.

Ver. 24. *The disciple is not above his master*—So as to be exempt from reproach and persecution.

Ver. 25. *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.*—He must be content with the same lot. Our Master has set us all a very high pattern; and it may be some comfort to us, in the worst of times, to know that he suffered more.

Ver. 26. *Fear them not therefore.*—Let nothing they can do to you stop your mouths. What you learn of me is for their sakes as well as your own, and must be fully declared to them, in spite of danger.

LECTURE.

In this chapter we read of our Lord's calling unto him his twelve disciples; of his giving them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease; of his commanding them to preach wherever they came, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and of the charge he gave them to enter immediately upon the work to which he had appointed them, without staying to make any provision for their journey, hereby teaching them to depend on the providence of God, and giving them a right to a maintenance from those to whom they preached. Now you must observe that the power he gave them of working miracles, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils, was chiefly in order to a farther end, viz. to prove their mission, to gain attention, and give

authority to their preaching. And what they had in charge to preach was, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which we are received to the forgiveness of sins, made heirs of heaven, governed by the laws of heaven, and prepared for the joys of heaven; that kingdom of grace and mercy promised from the fall of our first parents, and foretold by all the prophets, they were to declare was now at hand, and going to be set up under Christ the head of it. This was the great point they were commissioned to preach at that time, and afterwards to open more fully, when they were endued with power from on high, and the Holy Ghost was come upon them; which they did faithfully, and with the hazard of their lives, remembering Christ's words, not to flinch from their testimony, nor conceal any part of their message for fear of men. And, accordingly, the kingdom of heaven, under Christ, the head and governor of it, has ever since been in the world, published to all nations, and by the mercy of God, is come to us, who are baptized into it, and called to be partakers of all its blessings.

Brethren, I have a word to say to you upon this. You see plainly what I am to preach, and you to hear. The kingdom of heaven, or God's kingdom of grace, mercy, and peace, under Jesus Christ, the glory of belonging to it, and being made inheritors of it, as members of Christ, and children of God, what it is, together with the way and means of attaining to it, and securing our portion in it, is what I am to open and explain to you from time to time, as God shall enable me, upon the peril of my soul; the great mercy of your redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, is what you are to hear and understand upon the peril of your own, to bless God for it, to rejoice in it, and live worthy of it. What do you say to this? What have you done hitherto, to persuade yourselves,

upon good grounds, that you are Christ's disciples in his kingdom of heaven? What do you think of doing for the time to come? Do you think you can be Christians without Christian knowledge, faith, and practice; without repentance and conversion; without coming to Christ for the forgiveness which is by him; without living unto him that died for you; without valuing the Christian hope, and resolving to hold it fast, as your best portion from God? Christ is here appointing his twelve disciples to the office of making him known to the world; knew what opposition they would meet with in the discharge of it, and tells them beforehand that they should be hated of all men, for his name's sake; but, nevertheless, strictly commands them to publish and declare their message fully and faithfully, in spite of danger and death. But to what purpose did he do this? Why did he die himself, and give them up to death, if there was not a necessity, that what they had to speak in his name should be known, in order to its being received and believed? Do you know it? Are you seriously inquiring after it, knowing that it is the great mercy of God to you for the life of your souls; and that you must perish, if you are not established in the faith of the gospel, repenting of your sins, trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of them, and walking with him, as all his servants do, in the way of holiness? When Christ sent forth his apostles, he commanded them to "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" but it never yet came to you, and is still at as great a distance from you as ever, if in heart and will you are not brought into it. You must, therefore, know what it is, and what you want Christ for; you must be stirred up to seek after him with great earnestness, as the one thing needful; you must know that you are undone by sin, that you

are saved by grace, through faith, and snatched as brands out of the fire; you must be God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; you must be diligent readers of the word, and attend constantly upon the preaching of it; praying always in knowledge and faith, with truth of desire, sincerity of affection, and warmth of devotion, to be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, who hast called us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee; increase this knowledge, and confirm this faith in us evermore. Stir us up to a diligent study of thy word, and reveal it to our hearts; that knowing thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, we may love thy salvation, be steadfast in the truth, fight manfully against our corruptions, and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in him. If it be thy will that we should suffer reproach and persecution for Christ, make us to know that we are the disciples of a suffering Master, who endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him of rescuing us from death, and left us an example that we should follow his steps. Let the blessings he has purchased for us be the great desire of our hearts, that we may fear nothing so much as to lose them, and be ready to take up our cross in imitation of the meek, humble, and holy Jesus. And, O Lord, stand by us, and strengthen us in all our trials; preserve us in truth and purity, in faith and love, in innocence and holiness of life, and accept us to thy mercy in Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXI.

ST. MATTHEW, x. 29.

ARE not two sparrows sold for a farthing, &c.—The reasoning is to this effect. Men cannot hurt us without leave from God; and, if they should, when they have done their worst, still we are in the hands of a good providence, shall be safe in our best and dearest interest, and owned by Christ at the last to our unspeakable happiness, whatever we may suffer in the mean time for owning and confessing him. Here then is the great counterbalance against all other fears, present suffering in one scale, and hell in the other. Take notice again, that your trials are not so great as theirs; and think what you now risk the destruction of soul and body for. Dearly beloved, this is no vain threatening; if you would be safe, have it always before your eyes.

Ver. 34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.*—The world can come to no agreement with the Christian, without such concessions on his part as he ought never to make. Hence war and opposition; Christ's disciples contending for him, and his gospel, with hearts full of peace and good will; others against them, with deadly animosity. A person may have a good deal of what passes for religion, without being against the world, or setting the world against *him*. From this, as well as other passages, such may take occasion to examine into the ground of their hope. If all is quiet, it is to be feared there is ignorance, or desertion of truth, in the case.

Ver. 35. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father*, &c. 36. *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*—This is true, more or less, at all times; though it was more especially so, at the first

preaching of the gospel, when there was an opposition of different religions. Let but one or two of a family enter deeper into the spiritual life, or understand the Bible in a way of greater strictness than is commonly thought necessary, and the rest will set themselves to oppose a singularity which they do not choose to imitate, and suppose to be a condemnation of their conduct.

Ver. 37. *He that loveth father or mother more than me* — Cleaves to them in opposition to Christ.

— *Is not worthy of me.* — He refuses the greatest of all blessings, and, living and dying thus, will be left to his choice.

Ver. 38. *And he that taketh not his cross* — In a readiness to suffer. If we bore patiently, for Christ's sake, and in obedience to his will, the little crosses we daily meet with, we might have some ground to hope we are prepared for greater.

Ver. 39. *He that findeth his life* — Prefers it to me.

— *Shall lose it.* — The happiness of it here, himself for ever.

— *And he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.* — Unto life eternal.

Ver. 40. *He that receiveth you* — As sent by me, in love to your office and instructions.

— *Receiveth me.* — Truly, and actually, with all my benefits.

— *And he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.* — What farther encouragement can you desire for receiving Christ's ministers? You cannot say he does not send them to you. Whatever you may think of me, St. Matthew certainly is now speaking to you in his name.

Ver. 41, 42. *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet,* &c. — It appears from hence, that what God regards in all, is the will, the intention, the ground

of the heart, and where these are equal, will reward them equally. There is comfort in this: you may not have the gifts of another man, but you may have faithful, loving hearts. So receiving a righteous man with good-will and doing the least act of kindness to a disciple of Christ, as such, being an indication of the same faith, temper, and disposition, will as effectually show our interest in the divine favour.

Blessed God, we are bound to thank thee for the gift of the holy apostles by thy Son, and adore thy good Providence for planting the gospel of thy kingdom in this country. It is of thy mercy that we are not now sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. It is thy gracious will that we should be called to the knowledge of thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Support us in the way of godliness, against all the temptations of an ensnaring or opposing world; that, taking up our cross in obedience to Christ, confessing him before men, and being examples of peace and innocence, of patience and holy living, we may, through him, be accepted to the reward of his faithful followers.

LECTURE.

In this chapter our Lord solemnly appoints his twelve disciples to the office of preaching the kingdom of heaven, and gives them instructions for that purpose. He also, in great good-will to mankind, gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease; but the chief errand on which he sent them, and the great work they had to do, was to "preach, saying,

The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And what he ordained and commissioned them to preach, he likewise gives in charge to all his ministers to the end of the world. Here is their pattern, and the rule of their preaching at all times: they must speak to you in his name of the kingdom of heaven; tell you that it is at hand, and brought to your knowledge, one generation after another; set its blessings before you, and the necessity of entering into, and continuing in it. Is there any such thing as a kingdom of heaven upon earth; and may we be the subjects and members of it, children of God, living under his immediate government, and heirs of his promises? Yes, it is your happy birthright; at hand to you now, the moment you hear of it; freely offered to you, and your lives were given you that you might freely choose and enter into it, as the way to God's everlasting kingdom of glory in heaven. It is that kingdom which Christ came to preach, and set up in the world, as the mercy of God to perishing sinners; in which we are received to the grace of forgiveness, washed from all spot of sin in his blood, entitled by covenant to his perfect righteousness, born again of the Spirit, and live to him in obedience. In a word, it is Christ and his salvation, his grace opened to the soul, and his gracious rule in the heart, the entrance upon, and beginning of, the kingdom of heaven in us, or that new state, in which, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, rejoicing in our conscience, and account it our duty and great glory to be led by the Spirit of God. This is what you are generally to understand by the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, so often spoken of in the Gospels; it is the love of God, and the law of heaven brought down, and the door of heaven opened to us in Christ Jesus, and now is our time of entering into it.

his grace from God the Father, and from the Lord esus Christ, is all the relief you want in your undone tate, all the blessings you can desire; mercy and peace re now sounded in your ears, and presented to your hoice. Now, I say, is the accepted time, now is the lay of salvation for you; and, accordingly, as you ear, understand, and believe, you either enter into the ingdom of heaven, as the children and heirs of God, or ave it shut against you for ever.

My brethren, has this blessed kingdom of heaven been poken and manifested to your hearts in the knowledge nd love of it? Is it your great aim, and earnest desire, to e in and of it, whatever it cost you? Is Christ precious to ou as your best portion from the Lord, so that you can ay to your souls, you would not come short of his salvaion for the world? Are you altogether on his side, so that ou resolve to have no peace with your sins, nor with any who are his and your enemies, and would keep you from im? Can you give up your old state, and suffer the life f it to be taken from you, that you may find your true ife in him? Do you love his name and ways, esteem his eople as the excellent of the earth, and rejoice to help hem for his sake? Can you take up your cross, and follow him to the loss of all, if need be? If you know him, and what he has done for you, you cannot but know that he is worthy for whom you should do this. He endured the bloody fight, and overcame the sharpness of death, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers; and, if sin were your burden and great fear, you would be careful above all things to get and keep his peace, and dread nothing so much as to lose your interest in him. When you hear him saying to his messengers, if the house, man, or woman, be not worthy, by hardening themselves against the peace you offer in my name, let it return to you, it cannot belong

to them; surely it would strike cold to your hearts, to think you are never to have any share in the salvation of God. But so it must be, if you do not hear their words: and as Christ commanded them to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against all such, so it is a declaration of his own purpose to cast them off for ever. God be merciful to us, and teach us the right use of this chapter; that, hearing the kingdom of heaven preached, we may gladly enter into it, and make it our daily prayer to be established in it, and be made partakers of all its blessings.

PRAYER.

Blessed be thou, O Jesus, and blessed be thy goodness, for the gift of thy holy apostles, by whom we have been brought to the knowledge of the true God, and of thee, the Saviour of the world. Let thy Spirit stir us up to a diligent study of the doctrines and instructions which they have delivered to us in thy name, to value them as our guide to eternal life, and to be steadfast in the truth, in opposition to the deceitfulness of our own hearts, or the malice of those who are enemies to thy salvation. Convince us of the great blessedness of being admitted into thy kingdom of grace upon earth; that, for the hope which is set before us, and rejoicing in the mercy of our God, we may live worthy of thee, and be received into thy everlasting kingdom of glory. Hear us, help us, O Jesus, our God and Lord; confirm us in our most holy faith, give us all one heart to bless thee for thy salvation, to love thy name, ways, and people, and to endure faithfully to the end, that both now and evermore we may praise God for thee, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XXII.

ST. MATTHEW, xi. 1.

Ver. 1. *He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.*—Who would not but have heard Jesus preach! His discourses are upon record; and, if we do not hear them, we should not have regarded him. You know all his preaching was to this effect, Repent, and believe the Gospel. See your sin, and be vile in your own eyes; fly to Christ for remission, lay hold on mercy, and sin no more. If you think this is hard work, pray.

Ver. 2. *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples.*—God sends us to him. God bring us to him!

Ver. 3. *And said unto them, Art thou he that should come?*—The promised Deliverer, the Restorer of mankind to a new state of favour with God, and holiness in themselves. How dost thou read this Scripture, and what does thy soul say to it? Is this he, whom thou wantest, and art looking for? Thou hast no doubt of his being come, and of his being the Christ; but is the desire of thy heart to him for the salvation he brings? If it is not, what can it signify to thee what answer he returned to John's disciples, or what proofs he gave of his being the person that should come?

Ver. 3. *Or do we look for another?*—I do not suppose you do; but it does not, therefore, follow, that you look for him. You cannot, till you know that you are perishing without him.

Ver. 4. *Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see.*—John was in prison; it might be a dark hour with him; and, though the greatest of all the prophets, and holy from the womb, possibly he might now want some comfort, or satisfaction upon his own

account. But whether he sent the disciples for his own sake, or only for their conviction, it is remarkable that Christ refers them to his miracles, as full evidence in the case, and the ground of our belief in him, if he himself knew what was. And the belief of them establishes us in the belief of his doctrine, without gain-saying or disputing, and however cross it may be to our natural reason or inclinations.

Ver. 5. *The blind receive their sight,* &c.—So may you. If you believe all this, you cannot help saying "Great is our Lord, and great is his power." But this is not saving faith, this is not the belief that will help you. It can be nothing but faith in Christ for your own cure; and, if you stop short of this, you are no better for any thing you hear or believe of him.

—*The poor have the gospel preached to them.*—The blessings of the gospel are offered to the poor, as what they want equally with all others, and their circumstances in the world would more especially incline them to receive; but they are received by none who are not poor in spirit.

Ver. 6. *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*—Christ's outward appearance was the great stumbling-block then, the perfection and spirituality of his doctrine now; it is because he lays all flesh low, and comes with his fan in his hand.

Ver. 7—15. Christ, having observed to the people that they went to John more out of curiosity than for spiritual benefit, and looked for any thing in him rather than what he was, takes occasion from hence to tell them who, and what he was; and in magnifying his office, as his own forerunner, gives them to understand what great blessings were at hand, and ready for their acceptance.

Ver. 7. *What went ye out into the wilderness to see?*

May I ask what you come to church for, read the Scriptures, and believe in Christ?

—*A reed shaken with the wind?*—A teacher, pliable, and bending to your notions, or wavering in his own judgment? No such thing.

Ver. 8. *A man clothed in soft raiment?*—Such as they expected and wished Christ's forerunner to be, suitably to the notion they had entertained of his kingdom.

Ver. 9. *Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.*—The reason is given in the next words.

Ver. 10. *For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*—Behold, therefore, in what the pre-eminence of John consisted; it was in being sent to prepare the way of Christ, and usher in his coming. This office advanced him to a greater dignity than all that went before him. What then is Christ?

Ver. 11. *Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven.*—God's spiritual kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," opened by Christ, and still open to all that will enter into it.

—*Is greater than he.*—Every preacher, or hearer, truly Christian, knows and sees more of it than John did, it not being then fully manifested. What a happiness is it for us, if we knew how to value it, that we live under the full daylight of the Sun of righteousness! And it is all comprehended in two particulars, what Christ has done for us, and will do in us.

Ver. 12. *And from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*—The same kingdom of heaven, in which we are received to the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." Mark the words, that you may know what honour you are called to here upon earth. Let us be in,

and of this kingdom, whatever it cost us; for we are here given to understand, that there must be an earnest seeking after it. O for penitent wills, a lively faith, and the holy violence of prayer!

Ver. 13. *For all the prophets, and the law, prophesied until John.*—And no longer. The prophecies concerning Christ looked no farther, being then actually fulfilled. But there was a difficulty still remaining; for Elias must first come. He therefore adds,

Ver. 14. *And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*—And therefore Christ himself must immediately follow. Alas! they did not receive it. They had fixed their own interpretation of Scripture, and would not be set right.

Ver. 15. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*—What it so much concerns every one to understand, and hear effectually. Bring your hearts and consciences to the hearing of the word.

LECTURE.

My brethren, what have we heard from the mouth of our Lord to-day, and what use do you intend to make of it? Do you charge it upon yourselves to remember and consider what you read and hear; and have you a prayer for your souls that God would accompany it with his blessing, and seal the heavenly instruction of his word to your hearts? The passage I have now been reading, and a very awakening one it is, is to this effect: John Baptist, who was in prison for the faithful discharge of his office, having heard of the works of Christ, sent two of his disciples to him, for their information and conviction, with this question—" Art thou he that should come, or do

we look for another?" In answer to which, and to give them full proof that he was that person, the very prophet so long promised and foretold, that should come into the world for the deliverance and salvation of mankind, he referred them to his miracles, as the seal of his mission, and the foundation of our belief in him. And when they were departed, he spake to the multitudes, then gathered about him, concerning John, in order to magnify his office and ministry, by telling them who and what he was, and, by so doing, to turn their eyes to himself, whose messenger John was, being sent for no other end but to prepare the way before him, who had all the blessings they wanted in his own hands. Blessings so rich and so great, as to deserve the utmost earnestness of endeavour, steady purpose of heart, and persevering resolution, to obtain them; no less than the kingdom of heaven, admission to the grace, rights, and privileges of it here, and the glory of it hereafter. And what he said to the two disciples of John, and to the people afterwards, on occasion of their coming to him, throughout this chapter, he now says to you, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" the meaning of which is, that we are either fatally deaf, or blessed in our hearing, dead or alive unto God, just in proportion as we receive, understand, and believe his words of saving truth.

What, then, do you think of John's question, "Art thou he that should come?" Come, my friends? What to do? I will suppose you know the answer, to bless and to save mankind. What, all? the impenitent, hardened, and unbelieving; the ignorant and the careless, those who know nothing more of Christ than that they were baptized in his name, and live in all other respects as if he had never come into the world? Do not deceive yourselves, no such thing. He who came in our flesh, Christ, the Son of the living God, must come in your

souls. This, and nothing but this, is his coming to you; which cannot be till you desire it, know the end of his coming, and what you want him for. You are sinful creatures, and want forgiveness; you are weak creatures, and want help to live to God in obedience; you want mercy from the Lord in every part of your lives; you will want it at the hour of death, and the day of judgment. Have these things been opened to your hearts, so that you see the necessity of Christ to save you from eternal death, value him as the great mercy of God to you in your perishing condition, and would not lose your portion in him for the world? See, I say, what the answer of your souls is to these questions this day; and consider, I beseech you, what better you can be for knowing that Christ came into the world on the great errand of saving it, or calling yourselves by his name, if you do not understandingly, carefully, and earnestly seek after him, every one of you singly for yourselves, as your Saviour. Do you know in particular so much of yourself, of the nature of sin, and of your condition in the sight of God, as that Christ must have come into the world, fulfilled all righteousness, and died upon the cross, to save you from perishing, if there had not been another sinner upon earth? Are you willing that Christ should subdue the strength, as well as take away the guilt of your sin, and be both the mercy of God to you, and the power of God in you? Are you calling to him day by day out of the depth of your poverty, misery, and weakness, and saying, Lord Jesus, come quickly; Lord, save me, or I perish? And is it the great prayer of your hearts to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" Then you hear, then you believe, then the Gospel is preached to you with effect; then you can never be offended at Christ for any thing he commands you to believe or do, and blessed will

you be; for you are of the number of those who take the kingdom of heaven by force, and will have it opened to you with all its blessings.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who didst send thy only begotten Son to seek and to save us; give us grace to receive him with all humility and thankfulness, as the great Prophet that should come into the world, and the Redeemer of lost mankind. Make us to know that we are poor, and perishing in sin, that we may come to him as our Saviour and mighty Deliverer, washing us in his blood, purifying us by his Spirit, and making us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Let his miracles of healing convince us that our help is in him; let the desire of our souls be to the name, and the prayer of our hearts for the salvation of Jesus. Deliver us from all blindness and hardness of heart, stir us up effectually to seek after the blessings of thy kingdom, pardon, and peace, and newness of life by Christ, and accept us for his sake, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXIII.

St. Matthew, xi. 16—19.

From this passage we learn, that though God used a variety of methods with the Jews to bring them to repentance, yet, such was their perverseness, that, let him do what he would, they found out some pretence for cavilling at it. John was too reserved and austere, and therefore had a devil, was melancholy mad, as we say: Jesus suited himself more to the common way of living, and, therefore, was horribly reproached with too much

indulgence. We shall know one day the wisdom and mercy of God in all his dealings with *us*; what calls we have had, what various occasions of improvement, and how he has endeavoured to suit himself to us, and work upon us, whether by prosperity or adversity, riches or poverty, sickness or health.

Ver. 19. *But wisdom is justified of all her children.*—Whether appearing in the austere, mortified life of John, or in the more free and open conversation of Jesus, she will be discerned to be what she is, and not ill thought of, or rejected, for such differences of outward behaviour, by those who know her, and are truly enamoured of her. It would be well if this observation had its weight at all times with the children of wisdom, the lovers of God and goodness. What we disapprove, and, too often, censure in others, and they in us, may be the wisdom of God in both.

Ver. 21, 22. *Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works,* &c.—We do not read of any of his mighty works in the first of those places; though, doubtless, he wrought them wherever he went. The evangelists have recorded but few of his miracles, and those too selected, we may suppose, for the sake of some particular use or instruction. But what it concerns us more especially to observe is, the heavier doom of those who slight great advantages for reformation. Have you not the Scriptures in your hands? Do you not live under the light of the Gospel? Is not Christ preached to you? Is not the Holy Ghost always ready to teach your hearts?

Ver. 25. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* 26. *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*—Persons of the greatest na-

tural acuteness, or improved abilities, generally wise in their own conceits, and too proud to learn even of God himself, are not the fittest to receive the Gospel, which makes all stoop to it, but those who have the simplicity of children. This affirmation seems to be the thing here intended; and it is delivered by Christ in the form of a thanksgiving; for God will be glorified in them who believe not, as well as those who do. But observe further: can babes, the unlearned poor, attain to the knowledge of the truth? Nay, are they better fitted for it, and, in Christ's judgment, more likely to embrace it than others? Why then will you plead your want of learning and station in life, and be always catching at this pretence for not being wise unto salvation? Let your hearts bring you to Christ, and you know all; put yourselves unfeignedly into God's hands, and you do all. See what comfort there is for you in the next words, and how desirous Christ was to settle this point with you.

Ver. 27. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father* — To deliver to all that will receive them.

— *And no man knoweth the Son but the Father.* — Therefore the knowledge of him, what he is in himself, and what he is to us, must necessarily be by divine teaching.

— *Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.* — Man's wisdom, or learning, is here quite out of the question. The knowledge of him in Christ, which is the knowledge of him we are concerned in, and the way in which he offers himself to be known of us, can only be by Christ.

— *And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him* — Both by outward and inward teaching. The former in this book; the latter will be granted to your desire. One is in order to the other; and one without the other

will do you no good. It is a capital truth of Scripture; that revealed things are unrevealed, in effect, without divine illumination.

Ver. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*—With the burden of sin, and a sinful nature.

—*And I will give you rest*—Which neither any one else can, nor can you give to yourselves.

Ver. 29. *Take my yoke upon you.*—Not that of the Pharisees, laying upon you the heavy load of their traditions, and especially of the law as a covenant of life. And, that you may do it, and be prepared for the rest I have to give you,

—*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*—Be little in your own eyes, give up the pride of your hearts, give up all pretensions to a justifying righteousness or power to attain it by any will or wisdom of your own.

—*And ye shall find rest unto your souls*—In the remission of your sins, peace with God, and the gift of a perfect righteousness. We say, therefore, that Christ's rest is not principally meekness and lowliness, or any degree of Christian holiness; but rest to the conscience, from the guilt of sin, and fear of condemnation, accompanied with a will of obedience which makes duty pleasant to the soul.

Ver. 30. *For my yoke*—So understood, in the whole and every part of it, in its grace and commands, as a covenant and a rule, as refreshing the conscience, and binding the heart—*is easy, and my burden is light.*

Happy, O Lord, are they, who take thy yoke upon them, and learn of thee. For thou art the rest of our souls; thou speakest peace to them by thy forgiveness, and confirmest it to them in holiness. Thou art he that should come to preach the kingdom of heaven, and hast opened it to all believers. Reveal it to us,

we beseech thee, in the power of thy Spirit, and give us vehement desires after it; that, knowing thee by faith, and God by thee, we may justify thy wisdom, glorify thy mercy, and evermore rejoice in thy holy comforts.

LECTURE.

In this chapter we read of John Baptist's sending two of his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Art thou he that should come?" that is, to restore and save mankind; and how he answered the question by referring them to his miracles, as giving full satisfaction in the case, and sufficient proof that he was the great Deliverer, so long promised and expected. What do you think upon hearing this? Is it not necessary that you should all know what he came into the world for; and more especially, whether the design of his coming has been answered to you, by your desire to reap the benefit of it, seeking carefully his blessings, and resolving to secure them to yourselves? In the midst of his discourse which he made to the people, on occasion of John's disciples coming to him, he said, he says it now to you as much as if he was here in person, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear," what it so much concerns all to hear and understand effectually. And what have you heard to-day?

1. The great perverseness of mankind, in refusing and cavilling at God's ways of salvation, always finding fault with something or other in the method of it, or the external appearance and behaviour of those who brought it to them, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. John appeared in one form, strict and mortified in his diet; Christ in another, conversing more freely, not going so much out of the common way of

living; but neither would please the Jews. And where almost is the man who can separate the truth from the person, loves it for its own sake, and blesses God for it wherever he sees it?

2. Again, you heard the doom which Christ pronounced upon those places wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not—"it shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment." Sodom is a fearful and lasting monument of God's vengeance upon sinners; but observe carefully from hence, that the final doom and punishment of sin is reserved to another day, notwithstanding any sufferings in this world. Beware, therefore, lest you bring upon yourselves the heavy sentence you are here forewarned of, by continuing unawakened and unreformed under the preaching of the Gospel, and the advantages you enjoy for the knowledge of Christ. Do you not know him? Will you be always pleading against your own souls, that you are poor and unlearned, or have other business upon your hands, supposing it will excuse you?

3. Why then does Christ here thank God for revealing these things, all necessary, saving knowledge, unto babes, that is the lowest and meanest, if they will but learn of him? This was another thing you heard; and that as all things are delivered to him of the Father, so it was to make all, who receive him for their Teacher, wise unto salvation. He reveals both the Father and himself to us by his written word; and you must read, and hear, and study it diligently, for the knowledge of all necessary truth, and for the life of your souls, as you know you would if it was for the gain of this world. You must not pretend to be wise above what is written; nor to know any thing of God, of yourselves, of the accursed nature of sin, and of the way of salvation from it, but what it teaches you. You must bring every

thought of your minds, every suggestion of your reason, and every inclination of your wills, to be tried by the rule of Scripture, and reject, as false and hurtful, whatever does not agree to it. And, if we take the word of God for our guide, and follow it carefully, as the light which is put into our hands from heaven, it will most certainly be revealed to our hearts in the saving power of it, by leading us to Christ, and to God by him.

4. For you heard him likewise saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does Christ say, come, and really mean what he says? So the believer thinks, and does not further require to have his call assured to him by a particular testimony or private revelation, that his name is written in heaven, which is evidently distrust and unbelief; but takes Christ at his word, knows that his hearing and closing with it is faith, rejoices to hear it spoken on good authority, and gives glory to God. Come, therefore, upon the call of heaven, hear the voice of everlasting truth and faithfulness. Stop not at John Baptist; he said, "repent," but he could not say, "come to me, and I will give you rest." Go not to your prudence, good nature, humanity, civil, quiet behaviour, good deeds or duties of any kind, for rest to the conscience; they are all miserable comforters when sin is to be atoned for, and cannot give you an answer of peace. If Christ says, "Come to me," you must come or be undone.

You have been educated in the religion of Jesus, repeated your creed a thousand times, and never entertained any doubt of the truth of it; but, if you are not grounded in the belief of Christ from a heartfelt conviction of your fallen state, desert of punishment, and absolute want of a Saviour, your profession of him, and worshipping of God in his name, though attended with

ever so many shining accomplishments, is nothing but the common faith which is taken up by the generality upon trust, because it is the religion of the country where they live, and can have no effect in your justification. You must know, that you are lost and undone in yourselves, and that none but Christ can save you from eternal death. You must believe that he came into the world, by the appointment and will of God, to bear your sins in his own body, and deliver you from the damnation of them by the sacrifice of himself. This is the rest you want, peace of mind and conscience, the glad tidings and great grace of the Gospel. You must know and rejoice in God as a reconciled Father, receiving you to pardon for Christ's sake, and passing by all your transgressions, that in the sense of his love you may serve him with freedom of spirit all the days of your life. This is your new state in Christian knowledge, faith, and hope; so God is revealed to you in and through Christ, as the God and Father of mercies; so you come to Christ, as given to you of God for salvation; so you are made alive from the dead. And he says to one and all, come. The words are still sounding in your ears, "come unto me;" high and low, rich and poor, master and servant, old and young, "come unto me, and I will give you rest." If you are a saint in comparison of many others, you must come to Christ, sensible of your want of him, or perish; if you are ever so great a sinner, you may come and live. If you will but learn of him, he is meek and lowly, very compassionate and tender-hearted, and will not reject you with scorn and disdain, as your fellow-criminals in the pride of self-ignorance are apt to do, because you are sinners. He calls to you for that very reason to come to him. He invites you lovingly to take his yoke upon you: and he calls it a yoke, because he

knows it to be so, and because you must, in many things, go contrary to the bent of nature, be troubled for your sins, willing to part with them, and submit to his strict discipline. But, if this seems hard, and you refuse to come to him, either because you think you can justify yourselves, or because you like your sins better than his forgiveness and holiness, you must be left to your own choice; and that is, never to know God and Christ; never to know a saving work of the Spirit; never to know ease and freedom, rest and peace; but to have the galling yoke of sin and corruption, disobedience and opposition to the will of God, upon your necks here, and lie under the heavy load of it for ever.

PRAYER.

Lord God, who hast given us thy Son Jesus Christ to open our eyes, and turn us from darkness to light; incline us, we beseech thee, to submit to his teaching, and to put ourselves unfeignedly into his hands for the work of our salvation. Call us effectually to repentance, and by repentance to faith in thy mercy; and let our faith have its perfect work in the truth and sincerity of our obedience. Take from us all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word. Enable us to embrace, with thankfulness, the invitation of thy blessed Son, and to come unto him for that rest which we want for our souls, and which he only can bestow. Fill us, O God of hope, with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Renew us in the spirit of our minds, that we may approve things that are excellent, account the service of our divine Master perfect freedom, his yoke easy, and his burden light. And grant that we may learn of Christ to be meek and lowly in heart,

and to follow the steps of his most holy life, for his sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SECTION XXIV.

St. Matthew, xii. 3.

But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, &c.—What the disciples did, the Pharisees had determined to be unlawful. He does not argue that point with them, but takes a more effectual method to put them to silence, by reminding them of two examples in the case which they could not dispute.

Ver. 5. *The priests in the temple profane the sabbath.*—By doing that on the sabbath, in the execution of their office, which would be a profanation of it in others.

Ver. 7. *But if ye had known what this meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*—It is worthy of remark, that Christ urged this saying more than once to the Pharisees, who were scrupulous observers of outward things; not to discredit the use of them, but to commend what was more substantial, and show the vanity of substituting them in the room of it.

Ver. 8. *For the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*—Christ, by a divine right, is its Lord to dispense with it; and does actually dispense with it to every man in his need, according to the examples here alleged. It would be a great abuse of this indulgence, to make a necessity where there is none.

Ver. 10. *And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.*—It was miserable blindness in them, to interpret the rest of the sabbath of a rest from doing good, and then to

make his healing on that day a ground of accusation against him. Here was want of mercy indeed!

Ver. 11. *And he said unto them, What man is there of you,* &c.—How clear is this! He appeals to their own sense and practice; and yet you will find they were not convinced. They were prejudiced against him, and would not hear reason from him. It is your own case, whenever a preconceived opinion, a stubborn will, or powerful lust, stands in the way of his instructions.

Ver. 12. *How much then is a man better than a sheep.*—So he thinks of us; but if we have no better prospects, or higher enjoyments, than the beasts of the earth, what better do we make ourselves?

—*Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.*—Both by taking and seeking occasions; and good actions need not be deferred on account of the sabbath, any more than this was.

Ver. 13. *Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand.*—This he could not do, but by the power of Jesus. Stretch forth thine to him in faith and prayer; and know who gives thee the will to do it.

—*And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole as the other.*—Our restoration is as much Christ's work; and if we think we can do it ourselves, we know not what it is. All he wants is the turning of the will; and the will of man never turns to him but under a conviction of guilt and weakness. I would gladly persuade you to consider our Lord's miracles in this view, and how to make a benefit of them to yourselves. You cannot be mistaken in thinking yourselves as helpless as any that received their cure from him; and he will as certainly help you, if you put yourselves into his hands.

Ver. 14. *Then the Pharisees went out, and held a counsel against him, how they might destroy him.*—Doubtless you

think this was very hard and unjust. Are you sure you have no secret ill-will to him? Is there nothing in his doctrine that you think bears too hard upon you? If so, your will is to destroy him.

Ver. 15. *But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from them.* — To make the best use of the short time he had upon earth, and not for fear of any thing they could do to him, for he came into the world to die by their hands.

— *And great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.* — To what purpose do you read this, if you go without healing from him? Come to the point; either you want him for your souls, or you do not.

Ver. 16. *And charged them that they should not make him known.* — According to what follows, to avoid popularity; which was contrary to the meekness of his nature, and the humble character he had assumed. What poor ground of self-exaltation is all eminence in man, compared with his! And what will mortify our pride, if this does not?

Ver. 18. *Behold my servant whom I have chosen.* — To make all others his chosen servants, and show them the way of being so.

— *My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased.* — And with all others only as being in him, members of his body, and following his pattern.

— *I will put my Spirit upon him.* — Without which, as to his human nature, he could not have been his chosen servant, and the beloved of his soul.

— *And he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.* — That justice, or righteousness, by which they shall be his people in common with the Jews, and acquitted in judgment.

Ver. 19. *He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.* — Notwithstanding

the provocations of his enemies, and the encouragement he had from the popular favour, to be loud in his own vindication.

Ver. 20. *A bruised reed shall he not break*—But strengthen, and bind it up; the poor weakling. Be not content with thy weakness; but feel it, and seek to him for strength.

—*And smoking flax shall he not quench.*—If there is the least spark of a true life, he will blow it up into a flame. But be sincere with him; put thyself into his hands; and do not thou quench thy little spark, or let it die away, by taking thyself from him.

—*Till he send forth judgment unto victory*—By overcoming all opposition to his work in the soul, and getting the victory in judgment over its enemies. *He, He* must do this. O blessed Jesus, do it in *us!*

Ver. 21. *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.*—In his teaching, illumination, grace, and power, for wisdom, righteousness, and strength; never in themselves. The sacred writers knew what they said, or rather had their words given them. *Trusting in his name* would have been a very improper expression, if nothing more was meant by it than barely receiving him as a Lawgiver, or Teacher of morality, and professing his doctrine. It was never said of Socrates, or Plato, or any mere man, that their disciples trusted in their names.

LECTURE.

GREAT is the power of Jesus. If we are undone by sin, he is mighty to save, and has blood of infinite value to purge it. If we are weak, he can strengthen

us; if there is the least spark of a true life in us, he can kindle it into a flame. If we trust in his name, and put ourselves unfeignedly into his hands, he will be our all-sufficient helper, and make us victorious in our spiritual warfare. You have heard this in the passage of Scripture which has now been read; and on the warrant of it may assure yourselves that he will speak the word for the healing of your souls, carry you on from strength to strength, and take all possible care for your recovery. I beseech you, consider what use you are to make of our Lord's miracles of healing, and how you are to get life by the reading of Scripture. Christ said to the man who had his hand withered, "Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole like as the other." Do you hear and read this without self-application, and as a matter in which you are no way concerned? Do you think he never intended to work any miracles of healing but upon the bodies of men, during his abode upon earth? Are not our souls of much more value in themselves, and more precious in his sight? and may we not conclude that his chief aim in all he did was to heal and to save them; especially as they are all sick of a deadly disease, and must perish eternally without his help? Take notice, therefore, that in speaking to the man whose hand was withered, "Stretch forth thine hand," he now speaks and calls to thee, whoever thou art. Thy own heart must tell thee thou art the man, or woman, utterly disabled in thyself, and that he must be thy Saviour, to restore thee to the favour of thy God, and to a new state of health and soundness. What we here read is a proof, among many others, of his being sent and commissioned of God to be the Saviour of mankind; and if we never came to him in will and desire for our re-

covery, we are still unhelped and unhealed, and this day lying in our sins.

We are baptized, and call ourselves Christians, the disciples and followers of Jesus, and worship God in his name; but, if this is only an outward work, we are no better for him. What do you know of yourselves, and of your lost condition? What do you want from him? What would you say to him, what would you ask of him, if he was here present in person, and ready to grant your request? Would you, could you say to him, as Peter did, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" Would you tell him of your case, and say, Lord, help me, for I am a sinner, condemned and helpless in myself; grant me repentance unto life, purge my guilt, take away my sin, purify my heart, strengthen me for obedience, bring me to God, a new man in faith and holiness? Possibly, you do not choose to have any such words put into your mouths, and think to be Christians at a much easier rate; but, if this is not the knowledge you have gained of yourselves and of Christ, the very thought of your hearts, and the belief you live in, charity obliges me to say, what, perhaps, you would call uncharitableness, that he is no Christ, no Saviour to you. What you hear and read of him in Scripture works no effect, brings no salvation, if you do not apply to him in faith and earnest desire, as the Physician of your souls, and put yourselves into his hands with a distinct knowledge of your disease. Sin is that disease; and to be Christians, you must both know it, and how you are to be healed of it. You must know that none but Christ could remove that plague from you. You must see the great evil and deadly nature of sin, far beyond what you can imagine, in his sufferings, and

be very thankful to God for the remedy of his providing. You must repent of all sin, and submit to his teaching, and be as willing to be renewed by him to a state of holiness, as to be entitled to his forgiveness. This is the work he has to do in every soul. He brings a charge of sin against us; he shows us our danger; he stirs us up to seek for deliverance; he causes us to trust in his name; he confirms to us the mercy of our baptism, revives our hearts with a sense of his peace; and turns our wills to God in the love of his salvation. Dearly beloved, you may be of the number of those who are saved by him. He is now preached and declared to you for this purpose; but then it must not, cannot be in ignorance of your condition, not without repentance, not without faith in him, and desire of his benefits. If you come to him, and believe in him at all, it must be for healing; and he is ready for you, whenever you come to him with a knowledge of your distemper. He will put his Spirit upon you to guide you to him, strengthen and comfort you; and never leave you till he has made you new creatures, holy and beloved in him, and active unto God in willing obedience.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who seest that we are miserable and undone by sin, corrupt and helpless, look upon us in mercy, and bring us to thy Son Jesus Christ for restoration and healing. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, to enlighten our dark minds, to help our unbelief, to rectify our stubborn wills, to quicken our dead hearts; and every miracle of healing he wrought upon the bodies of men, is his call to every one of us to put ourselves into his hands for his

work of power in the recovery of our souls. O! let the desire of our souls be to the name of Jesus, thy chosen Servant. Put thy Spirit also upon us, that we, being chosen and beloved in him, may rejoice in his peace, gladly receive his instructions, and take him for our pattern in all things. And, O blessed Jesus, be thou our strength; do thou sit in judgment upon our lusts, and give us the victory over them. In thy teaching and grace we have all things; of ourselves we are nothing, and can do nothing. Hear us, help us, O Jesus, our hope, that, in the faith of thy salvation, and happy experience of thy power in us, we may evermore bless the God and Father of mercies for thee, our almighty Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXV.

St. Matthew, xii. 24.

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.—Take notice that the Pharisees, persons of learning and superior attainments, stand recorded as instances of the blindness, stubborn pride, and great perverseness of man's heart, when it is not brought under divine teaching and divine power. Nothing could be more absurd and weak than their pretending that Christ cast out devils by the power of the devil; and yet, with all their wisdom, they were not ashamed to allege it as the ground of their standing out against him.

Ver. 27. *By whom do your children cast them out?*—He observes this to show, that what they reproached him with, was merely the effect of their malice, since they did not reason thus in other cases of the like nature.

It appears from hence, that some amongst the Jews attempted to cast out devils, and sometimes with success.

Ver. 28. *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*—Just so far unto and in every man, as the devil with his works is cast out.

Ver. 29. *Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house,* &c.—Who is the strong man in us but the devil? And who can bind, or turn him out of possession but Christ? You are now reading of him, that you may know this, and fly to his power.

Ver. 30. *He that is not with me, is against me.*—There must be no halting with Christ. Therefore, think where you are, on his side, or the devil's; and whether you are with him in heart, will, and affection, or opposing his work in your own hearts and the world.

Ver. 31. *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.*—Certainly not without repentance.

—*But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men*—That is, ascribing Christ's miracles, which were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the devil. But could not this also be forgiven them upon their repentance? I suppose the meaning is, that it was such a degree of wilful blindness, obstinate unbelief, and opposition to Christ, and such a stumbling block thrown in the way of others, as would provoke God to withdraw his grace from them, and could hardly ever be repented of.

Ver. 32. *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man*—In his state of humiliation, and as considered in himself.

—*It shall be forgiven him*—Upon his repentance great as it is, and for the sake of that very Son of man against whom he speaketh.

— *But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it hall not be forgiven him* — For in so doing he rejects is help, and, being left to himself, must inevitably erish.

Ver. 32. *Neither in this world, neither in the world to ome*—That is, never.

Ver. 33. *Either make the tree good, and its fruit ood*, &c. — With respect to him, the goodness of the ree and its fruits was evidenced by his doctrine, life, nd miracles; with respect to themselves, their malevo-ent speeches against him were sufficient indications of n evil root and an evil nature.

Ver. 34. *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being vil, speak good things?*—Were they excusable because hey could not? So we are apt to think. But nothing ill excuse the evil that is in us; and, therefore, it is plain intimation that the nature from which it springs ust, of all necessity, be changed.

Ver. 36. *But I say unto you, That every idle word at men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in e day of judgment.*—All spiteful, reviling words, which e here under consideration; and not every merely *un-ofitable* word; for some such are unavoidable in the at of men. However, a well-disposed mind will take easion from hence to incline as much as may be to e safer side.

Ver. 37. *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, il by thy words thou shalt be condemned* — For the ason before given; because such as they are, such the inward ground of the heart.

LECTURE.

We have been reading how that, when one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, was brought to Jesus, he restored him immediately to the use of his sight and speech, by casting out the devil, "insomuch that the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?"—that is, that Son of David whom they looked for according to promise, and who was to work a great salvation for them. The common people, you see, judged right, and thought the very thing which Christ said for himself upon the occasion. It was a clear case with them, that, if he cast out devils, then the kingdom of God was come unto them; though the Pharisees, a sect of the Jews, conceited of their knowledge and holiness, but bitter enemies to Christ, and always stark blind, boldly affirmed, that he wrought his miracles by the help of the devil, which was just as likely as that Satan should act by his own power against his own interest, and destroy himself.

Well then, the matter is plain; Christ was the Son of David, the promised Saviour, and the kingdom of God was come with him; his works proved it, and there is no resisting the force of this evidence. But, I beseech you, do not stop here. Consider what you have to do for yourselves, and how you are to improve our Lord's miracles to the benefit of your own souls. When you read of his mighty works, one chapter after another, and are told, moreover, that he did many other signs, which it would have been endless to set down in writing, ask yourselves for what purpose chiefly he wrought them. You know it was that he might be acknowledged as the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world. Whose Christ, whose Saviour? Do you mean

ours? Do you think of yourself? Have you seen a want of him? Do you know of a truth that you are undone without him? Are you come to him for life; and are you now in his hands, to be helped, healed, and saved by him? If not, what is he to you? I have no intention, in any thing that I say, to call in question the efficacy and great blessing of your baptism; but what can it signify to you, if your own faith does not entitle you to the benefit of it, and prove you to be in a regenerate state? Why do you call Christ your Saviour, if you do not live in the belief of his being so, or have no saving work for him to do? You have sins innumerable to be forgiven; and every one of them brings you under a sentence of death, from which you must be absolved in perpetually renewed acts of repentance and faith.

You are by nature the corrupt trees, which can bring forth no good fruit. What will you do in this extremity? Will you not look to Christ? Will you not beg of him to give you repentance, to take the load of guilt from your hearts and consciences, and to change your nature? Will you not call earnestly to him for help, every one for himself, as you would if you saw your house on fire? Can you be thoughtless and indifferent when all is at stake with you for life or death, heaven or hell? He says, "He that is not with me is against me." You will not own that you are against Christ; but, you see, he is at a word with us; and if we are not with him in will and desire, and hearty concern for ourselves, he reckons that we are against him; as we certainly are, if we make so little account of his salvation as not to think it worth seeking after, or not better to us than all the world. And if you would know whether he has it to lay to your charge that you are *against* him, or, which is the same thing,

not with him, consider what thoughts you have of him and of yourselves now while I am speaking; bethink yourselves whether you ever asked any thing of him in your whole lives; I do not mean in a cold, formal way, or a bare saying of prayers, whether at church, or at home, but with careful, feeling hearts, and truth of desire. Were you ever burdened with your sin? Have you seen yourselves without righteousness and without strength, corrupt and helpless, and, in this sight of your condition, have you cried to him, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me?" Believe it, my dear friends, you must know both Christ and yourselves, what he is, and what he must of all necessity do for you, if ever you are the better for him. If ever he comes near to you with a saving work, and to set up his kingdom in your souls, he will bring you to him one by one, every man for himself, with an humble confession of your vileness, with thankfulness to God for providing such a sacrifice of atonement for you, with desire to have all your sins laid upon him, with full purpose to lay them down at his feet, and with sincere prayer to walk worthy of the mercy which is offered to you, by a patient continuance in well-doing.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Lord, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved. As thou hast given us thy Son Jesus Christ to heal all the diseases of our souls, give us grace to believe in him as our Saviour and mighty Deliverer. Open our eyes to see the greatness of thy mercy, and loose our tongues to speak thy praise. Take from us all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; that, beholding the miracles he wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, we may be led by the same

spirit to commit our souls to him, to trust in his name for the pardon of all our sins, and for strength against them, knowing that he only can bind the strong man in us, subdue the stubborn opposition of our wills, and deliver us from the power and malice of the devil. Oh! let our eyes be to him, and our hearts with him, for his grace and work of power in us. We are by nature the corrupt tree, and the fruit of it is evil, and only evil continually. Convince us of our misery and great want, and graft us into Christ; that, partaking of his nature, we may grow up to thee in love, abound in all good words and works, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, for the sake, and through the alone merits of the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXVI.

St. Matthew, xii. 38.

Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.—What they had already seen and heard was abundantly sufficient, if it had met with a right disposition: but what can convince those who will not be convinced, especially those who are wise and righteous in their own eyes? If we truly desired to see the miracle of our own healing and conversion by Christ, we should soon see the force of all the rest.

Ver. 39. *But he answered, and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.*—Evil, and thoroughly evil, whatever else they did, because adulterous, by taking their hearts from God. Observe the

sharpness of the reproof, and dread to hear it from his mouth.

—*And there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.*—What they required was some extraordinary sign, greater and more convincing than any he had wrought. One such he tells them they should have, viz. his resurrection from the dead.

Ver. 41. *The men of Nineveh, &c. repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here*—Now preaching repentance to you, calling you to it, at this time and place, in these very words, and pronouncing that very sentence upon you, if you do not repent.

Ver. 42. *The queen of the south, &c. came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*—O! what a shame it is for those who call themselves Christians, to be so little athirst for his wisdom, so backward to hear it, and so little acquainted with that holy book in which it is taught! How criminal is their neglect! What blindness is in their hearts! How just, how great will be their condemnation!

Ver. 43. *He walketh through dry places.*—Desert, uninhabited places.

—*Seeking rest, and findeth none.*—From this and the following verse, we learn that it is some kind of rest, or ease, to evil spirits, to be in men. How this comes to pass we need not inquire, as we cannot know. How to keep them from us, we must know at our peril.

Ver. 44. *He findeth it empty, swept, and garnished*—Empty of God, and prepared for his reception.

Ver. 45. *Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*—Their condition will be more desperate, and the devil have more full possession of them than ever, upon their refusing the means of grace and salvation offered them by Christ. All are exposed to this danger,

who will not repent at his preaching, and learn his wisdom.

Ver. 49. *And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren*—Towards you; and so he says of you, if you are his disciples.

Ver. 50. *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*—We cannot be mistaken in saying after Christ, that the nearest and dearest kindred is that of holy souls. But, my friends, what an honour is here put upon all such! And what spirit has possession of us, if we do not choose this relation to him, and steadfastly persevere in what he has told us is the only way to it?

LECTURE.

When we consider the mighty works wrought by Christ to prove his divine mission, and see the Jews still hardening their hearts against conviction, and demanding signs from heaven, we justly blame their stubborn unbelief. But is there not the same root of bitterness in human nature and our own hearts at all times? Else why is it that we are so slow to believe what is written of Jesus Christ, to admit the weight of evidence by which this testimony is confirmed, and to venture our souls upon the truth of it? When we are brought to a sense of our perishing condition in sin, and told of his will and power to save, why is it so difficult to persuade us to come unto him for life? Few penitent sinners are satisfied with the written word, or think *that* a sufficient warrant for trusting on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; but require signs, and won-

ders, and a new revelation, to ground their faith upon. This is certainly to tempt the Lord, after the example of the unbelieving Jews.

But let all, who have been called to the knowledge of his grace and to faith in him, reflect upon the concluding verse of this chapter. Who can think worthily of the great honour and high relation we are told of from the mouth of our Lord himself, and here called to, that of being his brother, sister, and mother? What thanks can we render to God for bringing us so near to himself, and making us his children by faith in Jesus Christ, and joint heirs of his glory? What is all earthly kindred to this? And what words can express our folly if we despise the blessing which is offered us, and wilfully refuse to be heirs together with him? I beseech you, call to mind, that both by nature and actual transgression we are all sinners, and under a sentence of eternal death. Is it nothing to be released from that sentence, and have our sin forgiven? Is it as nothing in your eyes to be accepted to a state of favour with God, and to the hope of an eternal inheritance in heaven, instead of being left to perish in your sins? May you, all and every one of you, be so near and dear to Christ, and so beloved of God, and will you slight so noble a privilege, and sell your Christian birthright for any thing in the world? If you were told of such a blessed alteration in your condition, and that, instead of being under the displeasure of Almighty God, sinful dust and ashes, you might be the brethren, sisters, and mothers of Christ, so esteemed of by him, so dear to God, and at the same time had been left in ignorance how you might attain to so happy a state, would you not have made all possible inquiry about it, and been full of concern lest you should come short of it? Behold, it is here plainly set before you; you have heard the

words, and must not pretend ignorance; Christ says, if you would be found in this high and happy state, you must do the will of God. I say, be found in it, for he first brings us into it; he only could redeem us from the curse we are under by sin; he is the Peace-maker in his blood; and, "by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." But if we do not walk worthy of the mercy we have received, by resolving and faithfully endeavouring to do the will of God, as knowing that we are thereunto called, we sadly deceive ourselves, if we think we have any relation to Christ, or portion in him. Who then is the Christian? And what does every one think and say who has his eyes opened to see the glory he is called to in Christ? "Is this the goodness of God to me a sinner? Is this the rich mercy I am heir to; and may I assure myself, upon the warrant of this passage of Scripture, that if I do the will of God, I am the brother, sister, or mother of Christ; and that he now sees me in that great and happy relation, as being one with Christ, clothed with his righteousness, and entitled to all the merits of his life and death? Yes, blessed be God for it; and may he keep me a living member of Christ, and enable me to show forth the praises of him who hath called me out of darkness into his marvellous light, in all the fruits of a holy conversation. By his grace it shall be the settled purpose and steady aim of my life, to study his will that I may do it. Whatever it costs me, I will belong to Christ, and think nothing too difficult to do, or too grievous to suffer, that I may be owned by him as his brother, sister, or mother. This is an honour I am no way entitled to, and should never have presumed to think of without his warrant and authority; and, since I have his leave to do it, God forbid that ever I should be so ungrateful to him, or such an enemy to myself, as to slight the invaluable mercy he has shown me,

and the glory he has called me to, unworthy as I am, by living to my own will, and continuing in rebellion against him. For slight it I do, if I live not in obedience to God; and I am well assured from this very passage of Scripture, where Christ says, 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,' that whosoever does not faithfully and conscientiously endeavour and pray to do the will of God, cannot belong to him."

Remember what our Lord says many times over—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It is a joyful, happy condition: and well worth your hearing and believing, that we may be so near akin to Christ; and that when we are, he has more love and tenderness for us than the nearest relations can possibly have for one another. But then, if we would claim the benefit of his kindred, and as ever we hope to be owned by him, we must be made conformable to his nature, resemble him in his goodness, and prove that we are children of the same family, by doing the will of our heavenly Father, as he did. Let not what you have now heard rise up in judgment against you. Let not the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, let not the queen of the south, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, condemn you for the hardness of your hearts in standing out against the preaching and wisdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let not the evil spirit find you prepared for him by your neglect and ignorance of Christ and his blessings. Ask yourselves before you go to sleep, whether you have learned, or are willing to learn, wisdom of him, to be guided by him into the way of peace, happiness, and salvation, and understand, as exactly as you can, what he came from heaven to teach us; to know a just and holy God; to know what you are in sin; to see your natural blindness, corruption, and helplessness;

to see a need of Christ to save you from the guilt that is upon your souls, and of the Spirit to enable you to live unto God, and to pray in truth and sincerity that his will may be done in earth as it is in heaven. The Lord incline you so to hear, that you may feel a prayer in your hearts for the teaching, work, and blessings of Jesus. Let those who can, join with me in prayer for this; and, O God, hear us for those who cannot pray for themselves.

PRAYER.

Jesus Christ the righteous, eternal Son of God, able to save us, and Son of man, that thou mightest wash us from our sins in thy blood, and join us to the Godhead in thyself, make us thy own children by similitude of nature, in the spirit of regeneration; that following thy example in doing the will of God, thou mayest not be ashamed to call us brethren. O! let not the evil spirit return to take possession of us; but give us grace to repent at thy preaching, to hear, and continue in thy wisdom. And may the ever-blessed Spirit, whom we adore, with the Father and the Son, dwell in us; strengthen and comfort us; that being grafted into thee by his operation, we may believe to the saving of our souls, have our fruit unto holiness, be victorious in the power of thy name over all the enemies of our salvation, beloved of God for thy sake, and accepted through thy alone merits, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer! Amen.

SECTION XXVII.

ST. MATTHEW, xiii. 2.

AND great multitudes were gathered together unto him.—They will be gathered unto him once more, together with

every one of us, that all may hear their final sentence from him.

Ver. 3. *Behold, a sower went forth to sow.*—Behold! the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven! And he is always carrying on his work, and now ready to sow the seed of eternal life in your hearts. Are *you* ready? Are you now all here with the same intent? The contents of this chapter are easy to be understood, and withal very important. You will hear of a seed-time and harvest, of the several hindrances of a work of grace, of true and false professors, and of the different judgment that will be passed upon each, according to the neglect or improvement of their advantages under the Gospel. Oh! how earnestly should we pray, that we may be found in a true work, seeing it must, of all necessity, be done, and we can do nothing of ourselves. Do thou, Lord, open our hearts, that what we are going to hear may sink down into them, and in the power of thy grace be a saving word to us.

Ver. 10. *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou to them in parables?*—A parable is a similitude, contrived for the sake of some farther use than the words at first hearing seem to import. As this method of instruction is more awakening, and sinks deeper than any other when the drift of it is understood, the great Master of divine wisdom frequently makes use of it. The disciples thought he should have spoken plainer. He tells them in effect, that nothing is plain to those who will not understand; and that, if we are ignorant of divine things, we must look for the cause of it no where but in our own dark hearts.

Ver. 11. *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given to you, &c.*—They were desirous to know, and fitted to receive divine mysteries.

—*But to them it is not given.*—For the reason here-

after mentioned, viz. because they refused what was offered them; just as any thing else is not given, when it is not taken. Will you let Christ take back his precious gift of saving knowledge, with the grace which would accompany it? Are you the man or woman, of whom he says, to *you* it is not given?

Ver. 12. *For whosoever hath.*—Values, and holds fast what he hears.

—*To him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.* Here is no exception, as if this was the privilege of some, and not of others. Saving knowledge is knowledge in abundance, and if a poor man has it not, it is his own fault. This chapter, this one evening's reading, has a blessing for all that will receive it.

Ver. 12. *But whosoever hath not.*—Valueth not, and consequently possesseth not.

—*From him shall be taken away even that he hath.*—Heareth, but doth not receive and improve. Would you think it an unspeakable loss, if this book was to be taken away from you, and you were never to hear a word more out of it? Ah! you have it not, if you have it only in your hands, and ask not for the grace which must open it to your hearts.

Ver. 13. *Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not,* &c.—To hide from them what they would not see, if it had been delivered ever so plainly. And we learn from hence, that it is just with God to leave wilful blindness to itself.

Ver. 14, 15. *And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias,* &c.—When you hear these words, and think what a dreadful condition this is for any one to be in, can you help saying, Lord, is it I? Am I dull of hearing when Christ speaks? Do I close my eyes against his light, and harden my heart against his Gospel?

Ver. 15. *Lest they should be converted, and I should*

heal them.—Let this put you upon examining into your state, what endeavours you use, what prayers you ever put up for conversion and healing from the Lord, and what experience you have of it.

Ver. 16. *But blessed are your eyes, for they see.*—Effectually, and savingly. No seeing or hearing, short of this, is blessed.

Ver. 17. *For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see,* &c.—Not so much Christ in his own person, as in the full manifestation and rich mercies of his Gospel. What reason have we to thank God for the light of it! And what shall we say for our ignorance or unfruitfulness under the advantages we enjoy?

Ver. 18. *Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower.*—He does not speak this in vain. You may hear, and consider, and apply it to yourselves, if you please. Do not harden your hearts both against parables and explanation.

Ver. 19. *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.*—Spiritually; that is, does not consider and lay it to heart, as the word, or law of Christ, to be received by all who belong to his kingdom.

—*Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.*—Observe the ground where Christ sows his seed, and where only it can grow; and also, what a busy enemy we have about us to hinder the growth of it. The devil has his eye upon our hearts, as well as God. If our own is there too, he cannot hurt us.

Ver. 20, 21. *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it,* &c.—You see there may be some sensible delight in the word, and joy in hearing it, where there is no true work of grace; and many, no doubt,

speak peace to themselves on this account, who have no abiding root, and can stand no trial. Indeed, it is hard to know what our root is till we *are tried.*

Ver. 22. *And the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*—If the word is choked, it signifies nothing what does it. I observe this, because it is so common with you to make your worldly business, or the care of providing for your families, a pretence for neglecting your souls.

Ver. 23. *But he that receiveth seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it.*—Not barely as to its outward meaning, for that you may do without effect; but he who has the grace given him to know how great a good it is to him, and how suitable to his wants, relishes the inward sweetness of it, takes it into his heart, and resolves to be guided by it.

—*Which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.*—All must be in a fruit-bearing state of obedience from a root of faith; and all who are will be so accounted of. But why some bring forth less than others, whether because they have less ability given them, or improve less what they have, must be left to the great Judge.

LECTURE.

CHRIST, in the portion of Scripture you have now heard, has been sowing the seed of eternal life among you, at this very time and place, and is ready to give a blessing to it; and, according as you do, or do not receive it into your hearts, you will be alive unto God through Jesus Christ, or faithless dead worldlings, happy or miserable for ever. Well, therefore, might our Lord

say, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" and I beseech you in his name to hear the awakening call from his mouth. Begin from this day to examine what foundation you are upon for life. Consider whether you have heard, understand, and value the word, are careful to use it aright, and keep a watchful eye upon the hindrances of it here brought to your knowledge. For it can only become the word of life to every single soul, by taking root in it, and growing up to perfection, and no excuses will be allowed for your neglect and unfruitfulness under it. "What you have not," that is, hear and do not use to the end for which it is given, "will be taken from "you;" and your condition will be just the same, as if there was no word of life, no Gospel, no Christ to save you. If you are the way-side hearer, where the devil immediately catches away the word, as birds do seed which is scattered in the highway: if you are the stony ground hearer, and, perhaps, receive the word with some kind of delight, but do not suffer it to take root; or if the cares of this world choke it, the design of it is lost, God is lost, Christ is lost, the soul is lost; and whether it is in any one of the ways here mentioned, or all of them put together, it matters not how, it is lost for ever.

This, you see, is evidently the meaning of the parable, as explained by our Lord himself. Let me desire you to bring yourselves to be tried by it; let me ask you some questions concerning it. And do thou, O Lord, open all our hearts, that what we have heard may sink down into them, and, in the power of thy grace, be a saving word to us! Are you convinced of the necessity of caring for the soul? The first effect or fruit of the word is to put us upon this care. Before the coming of it, we have quite other things in our heads, are all for the world, and concerned for nothing but how to get, and keep, and

enjoy as much of it as we can. Do you find within yourself that the word is come to you with power in this respect, to awaken you out of the dead sleep you are lying in by nature, to put you upon considering the state of your soul, the exceeding great value of it, and how you must be prepared for eternity? If you are come thus far on your way, you will be full of thought and inquiry what you must do to be saved; and think yourselves happy if you can meet with a sure guide to show you the way you desire to be in, and bring you to the end you have in view. Why, here in this book is the very thing you want, Jesus preached, and set before you for the life of your souls. Do you then read and study it to the end you may profit by it, with prayer to have it opened to you, and with a sincere resolution to walk in the light of it? Do you receive it, as indeed it is, the word and will of God for your salvation, given you in great mercy to guide you to heaven? Have you found Christ in it? Has it brought you to him for the help you want, so that you are seeking carefully after his blessings, and can have no ease in your minds if you had all the world without them? You are hearing of his miracles from time to time, and all to the end you may know who he is, and that he is as able and willing to work your cure, as in the case of any of those whom you read of. The great difficulty is to know your sin and danger in it, and that you are sick of a deadly distemper, which none but he can cure. When you do, the word which reveals him to you as the Son of God, mighty to save, will be precious in your eyes, and a cordial at your hearts, and you will gladly follow his directions. If he says, "repent," you will repent. If he says, come to me for pardon and life, you will come to him; you will see the necessity of believing and trusting in the all-sufficient sacrifice

and healing virtue of his blood, in opposition to any will, work, or merit of your own, and pray daily to the Lord to increase your faith. If he says, "why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say?" you will be careful to prove yourself an heir of the mercy you have received, by fashioning your hearts and lives according to his rule, and committing your souls to him in well-doing. Let not Christ call to you this day in vain, to hear and be saved. Let not Satan take the word out of your hearts in the turn of a thought, it may be while I am speaking it. Think it not enough that you have nothing to say against it, and, perhaps, are pleased for a time with the hearing of it. Let not the cares of the world choke it; make not your business in the world a pretence for neglecting your souls. Let the good word enter deep into your hearts, lay you low in your own eyes, bring you to faith in Christ, and by him to a state of pure obedience. This is hearing and understanding to life everlasting. God be merciful to us, and make us all such hearers!

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who teachest man knowledge, and guidest the humble soul into all truth; instruct us, we beseech thee, in this mystery of thy kingdom, that, receiving thy word into the ground of an honest and good heart, and bringing forth fruit with patience, is the truest wisdom. Help us to disover in the natural deceitfulness of our hearts all the hindrances of our salvation, all the wretched causes of our unprofitableness under the word, and deliver us from the dreadful judgment of seeing and hearing without understanding. For thy mercy's sake, speak now to every careless, hardened, and worldly heart among us. Let what we have heard this day teach us to discern the true state of

our souls by the marks here set before us, and grant we may know, before it be too late, to what kind of unprofitable hearers we belong. Lord, help and awaken us, that we may so hear as to believe, and so believe as to be fruitful unto thee in all holy obedience, and find mercy for Christ's sake. Amen.

SECTION XXVIII.

St. Matthew, xiii. 24.

The kingdom of heaven — The state of the Gospel, or God's kingdom of grace in this world under Christ; for there are no tares, or weeds, in his kingdom of glory. And it is so called, for this among other reasons, because his kingdom of grace and kingdom of glory are one and the same kingdom, in its beginning and perfection; and if we are not in, and of it, when we die, we cannot be admitted into it afterwards.

Ver. 24. *Is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.*—Christ has no other; the tares, as you will hear, are of the devil's sowing.

Ver. 25. *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares.* — He is thine enemy, because he is Christ's. Take notice that he does not sleep, though thou dost. Know thy danger, and beware of giving him this advantage against thee.

Ver. 29. *But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*—This is not man's work; he has not discernment for it, and, we know by experience, oftener roots up the good than the bad. Look well to your own work under Christ, which is to root the tares out of yourselves.

Ver. 30. *Let both grow together until the harvest, &c.*—We lie down in our graves either tares or wheat. How dreadful is it to think of that time when the separation will be made once for all!

Ver. 31. *The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed.*—Hast thou no room in thy soul for this little seed? Oh! take it in without delay, and commit the growth of it to Christ, that it may spread and flourish, as it certainly will, under his care.

Ver. 33. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven.*—Let Christ set his leaven to work in thy heart, and it will convert thee wholly into its own nature. These two parables may be considered either with respect to the Gospel in general, its beginning, progress, and perfection, or to the state of particular persons. The former will have its accomplishment in God's time; the latter is every man's great concern; and happy are they, who find these similitudes verified in themselves, and the kingdom of heaven growing up, and working in their own souls.

Ver. 36. *His disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*—Say as they did, and pray continually that he would declare and speak it to thy heart.

Ver. 37. *He that sowed the good seed, is the Son of man.*—Thou dost not sow it thyself. Only do not hinder him; and he will both sow, and water, and watch over the growth of it. Ask thyself, Is it sown? Is it increasing? Is this thy desire and earnest will?

Ver. 38. *The field is the world.*—And all in it are either the good seed, or useless weeds.

—*The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.*—Now is thy time for choosing whether of the two thou wilt be.

Ver. 39. *The enemy that sowed them, is the devil.*—He cannot do it without thy own consent.

Ver. 43. *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*—All is here told us; heaven and hell are now opened to us; it will be just as thou readest; and according as thou hearest, so will it be done unto thee.

LECTURE.

My brethren, in this portion of Scripture you have life and death, heaven and hell, set before you, together with the means of obtaining the one, and escaping the other. You cannot help coming to this conclusion, that, if you would be the children of your heavenly Father, and heirs of his kingdom, you must receive the seed of his word into your hearts, and look well to the growth of it; and, if you do not, or suffer the enemy to choke it with his tares, that you must have your portion with him. What that is, you are here assured, not by man, whose decision in the point you might be apt to dispute, but from the mouth of Christ himself, whose authority should strike both conviction and terror into your souls—"they that do iniquity shall be cast into the furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The blessed angels, who are appointed to minister to us, and now watch over us with tender care and concern for our everlasting welfare, we are told, will then be sent to gather all the wicked out of God's kingdom, and separate them for ever to their own place. It will be a sad office for any of us; but they who are devoted to the will of God, and happy in serving the ends of his glory, will be no longer concerned for us, but as

ready to execute his sentence for the destruction of the ungodly, as they once were, when time was, to help forward their salvation. It is said, "they will gather all such out of his kingdom;" not his everlasting kingdom in heaven; for they who belong to it, and are once in it, will not be cast out, but have their abode in it for ever. The kingdom, therefore, here meant, is God's kingdom upon earth under Christ, into which we are admitted by baptism, and bind ourselves to live according to the laws of it. Out of this we may, and shall be cast, notwithstanding our Christian name and profession, if we are not Christ's disciples in truth and sincerity, by faith and holiness. Nay, strictly speaking, we are no farther in it now in this world, than as we are alive unto God, and give all diligence to secure to ourselves the blessings and privileges of it. We cast ourselves out of it by our own act and deed, and he cannot be deceived as to our present state and condition. Whatever we think of ourselves, or whatever the world sees in us, he knows we do not belong to him; and the separation which will be made at the day of judgment, will be accordingly as we have separated ourselves to God, or the service of his enemy, during our lives. For Christ, the Judge as well as Redeemer of mankind, and the great Prophet of his church, hath repeatedly set the seal of heaven to this solemn truth, that none shall be admitted into God's kingdom of glory, who are not of it now in will and desire, in his preparatory kingdom of grace upon earth. Surely, I say, this is an awakening consideration, and should put us upon examining seriously, and with great care, what we are in the world; whether we get up and lie down, walk about, and do our business in it day by day, as members of Christ and heirs of God's kingdom, or children of the devil; whether we are travelling in the road that

leads to heaven, or going on blindfold and fearless in the highway of destruction.

When Christ had delivered this parable, the disciples came unto him, desiring that he would declare, or explain it. These were good hearts; they wanted to know the truth, they were willing to be instructed, and such a request is never denied by him. Do not say you are poor and unlearned, and have no opportunity of knowing much, or that you are a busy man, and have but little time to think of your religious concerns. For what is this but saying and confessing that you are asleep, and giving the enemy of your souls the advantage he wants, and will be sure to take? Do you not hear that heaven or hell is at the end of your life? Are you not told that Christ soweth his good seed in the field of your hearts, with a design that it should grow and prosper under his care, and with a promise that it shall flourish like a grain of mustard seed, or work as leaven? Can you say that you do not understand the meaning of all this? Alas! you will not; for it is as plain to your capacities, as if an earthly master was to say, Go into the field to plough, or sow, or weed, or do any other kind of work. My brethren, do this one thing, and all will be well; say to Christ, as the disciples did, "Master, declare unto us the parable;" or rather, as he has expounded it, pray that his words may be effectual and saving, and that he would speak all to your hearts. Say to him daily, Lord, deal with me as thou pleasest, only let me not pass through the world ignorant of thy truth, and careless of my salvation; let me not live a Christian only in name, sleeping over my work, and die an useless weed, fit only to be burned. To this end let us all pray, and may God enable you to accompany me with your hearts!

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast given thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, that in it he might instruct us by his doctrine and example, live and die for us, redeem and save us; keep us, we beseech thee, in thy kingdom of grace, that, passing through it as the only way to our heavenly inheritance, we may be prepared for thy kingdom of glory. Enable us to discern what manner of spirit we are of, what has the strength of our desires, and what is the great end we are aiming at in the world. Thou hast set life and death before us; for thy mercy's sake incline us to make a right choice. And to this end, O Lord, make us ever mindful of that time when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come to separate the tares from the wheat; that, having passed the time of our sojourning here in thy faith and fear, we may be owned by thee as the children of thy kingdom, and received into thy everlasting glory, for the sake and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XXIX.

St. Matthew, xiii. 44.

Again; the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field.—The blessings of it are inestimable, and cannot be too dearly purchased by us. So says this and the next parable. Christ, therefore, now comes nearer to the soul, and puts us upon searching into our own disposition and sense of the matter, whether we do indeed value the kingdom of heaven in some proportion to its worth, and prefer our portion in it to all the world.

—*The which when a man hath found*—When his eyes

are opened; when he sees himself inexpressibly poor without the treasure of the Gospel, peace with God, the graces of the Spirit, and the hope of eternal life, and knows that he shall be rich to the height of his wishes in the possession of it. My friends, this is a happy finding; and when once you come to this point, you will have Christ at any rate.

Ver. 44. *He hideth* — Esteemeth, as men do what they hide, and lay up.

— *And for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*—May I persuade you to ask your hearts what is your great joy, and if you must part with every thing but one, what it would be?

Ver. 45, 46. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls*, &c. — So we naturally seek rest for our souls, ease, and contentment, in one worldly thing after another. Be instructed; the search is vain, and all our endeavours fruitless. Happiness never comes but with the pearl of great price. May *you*, may *all* have it? Yes, blessed be God, it is here offered to every one of us, and this is our call to seek after it.

Ver. 47. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.* — So, you see, the kingdom of heaven, or church of Christ, consists of a mixture of good and bad. You are gathered into it by baptism and outward profession; but, if this is all, you will one day be cast out of it for ever. Let this be a warning to you to make deep search into yourselves.

Ver. 49. *And sever the wicked from among the just.*—We cannot possibly be sorted with the just, if we are not first separated from evil in this world. *Then* it will be too late to repent.

Ver. 51. *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?* — Nothing can be plainer. And yet I must

tell you again they are not understood, according to Christ's meaning, unless they are well considered, prayed over, and applied to the state of your own souls.

Ver. 52. *Therefore every Scribe which is instructed, &c.* —Must have all kinds of instruction ready at hand, and be able to turn himself into all shapes, for the good of his hearers. It is well if many individuals furnish out such a scribe.

Ver. 57. *And they were offended in him.*—A little matter will serve for a handle against those who preach a pure religion; and the quarrel is with *that*, whatever is pretended.

—*A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house*— Where the man is seen as well as the prophet. Let not others, therefore, wonder that they are most despised, where they are most known.

Ver. 58. *And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*—He knew it would be in vain; their unbelief, as it were, tied his hands. His mighty work here is our conversion. God be merciful to us, and perform it in us mightily!

LECTURE.

CHRIST'S mighty work in the world at all times is the conversion of sinners; and he is always ready for it, always watching over it, and waiting for the happy time when he may begin, carry it on, and complete it. He is present with you now at this time and place; he comes to you this day with the offer of his blessings; he tells you of the pearl of great price, how necessary it is that you should be possessed of it, and what you must do to obtain the kingdom of heaven. You must seek carefully

after it; you must desire it with the whole bent of your souls; you must make it the dearest treasure of your hearts, and value nothing in comparison of it. You must consider and examine diligently what you are aiming at in the course of your lives, what you are in Christ's net, whether of the good or bad kind, and whether you keep your eyes steadily fixed upon that time when "the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just," that each may go to their own place for ever; the just to the heaven they have been preparing for, and the wicked into the furnace of fire.

The exhortation, therefore, from hence, is to know and be convinced that Christ has a great work to do in you, to bring you to God in repentance for the remission of sins, and to purify your hearts by faith. I am often telling you that the great design of his miracles, which you read of in the Gospels, is that you may see your help in him, and put yourselves into his hands for it, assuredly believing that he is able to save all that come unto God by him, and that without him you perish. When he is the pearl of great price with you, and you thus come to him in faith and longing for his benefits, desiring his whole salvation, resting your souls upon him for your acceptance with God, and resolving to be governed by him, your eyes are opened, the light of heaven has shined into your hearts, the good seed is growing up, Christ's leaven is working in you, your great work is going forward, and, whatever is your lot in the world, you have comfort enough to live and die with. Hold on, and hope to the end; thank God for his mercy, and pray for strength to keep it, and you are the children of his kingdom, beloved in Christ, and heirs of the glory which he has purchased for you. On the other hand, you must not think yourselves Christians, till you know such a work as this, and you are, indeed, "seeking the kingdom

of God, and his righteousness in the first place;" you must not trust in your baptism, good name and honest dealing in the world, or any kind of outward behaviour. You must not be ignorant of your condition in sin, and that you cannot remove the curse of it from yourselves. You must know what a blessing Christ is to you, what he has done for you, and has to do in you. You must cry to him, as the blind and the lame did when he was upon earth, Lord, help me. You must lay hold on him as your Saviour, who has made your peace with God; be inwardly stirred up to secure your portion in him, and desire nothing so much as to be owned by him for his disciples, in truth and sincerity, in faith and obedience. Dearly beloved, let it not be said that the Lord Jesus Christ has no right in you, no influence over you, no honour from you, no glory by you. Oh! let it not be said that you are offended in him; as you certainly are, if you do not truly and earnestly desire his coming in your hearts, to turn you from darkness to light, to convince you of the greatness of God's mercy, and your great want of it, and to keep you faithful to Christ in the love of his salvation. The Lord enable you now and always to present yourselves before the throne of grace with the words of St. Paul in your hearts, and every one of us to pray devoutly for ourselves, as he did for us all.

PRAYER. (Eph. iii. 14, 21.)

I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant me according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; that I, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what

is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen.*

SECTION XXX.

St. Matthew, xiv. 2.

This is John, &c. and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him — But all to no purpose. Whether the mighty works were done by John Baptist risen from the dead, or Jesus, he was Herod still. *We* know they were the works of Jesus, and to what end they were wrought. Are we not then more hardened than Herod, if we are not converted by them?

Ver. 4. *For John said unto him, it is not lawful for thee to have her.*—Especially, as his brother was living. What undaunted boldness in this servant of God! If thou hast no zealous minister, or faithful friend, to tell thee of thy sin, let thy own conscience do it. For does not the law say, does not Christ say to thee, concerning every sin, *it is not lawful?* We hear them, and perhaps with some degree of respect and fear, as Herod did John, and yet the sin is retained.

Ver. 5. *When he would have put him to death, he feared the people.* — It is wonderful to consider how men are withheld by the secret providence of God from doing all the mischief they would, and what obstacles he lays in their way. Nevertheless, Herod was not restrained by

principle; and, therefore, nature at last prevailed. It is worth our while to observe this, that we may look well to the ground of our hearts, and know whether we are preserved from the commission of evil by the fear of God and hatred of sin, or by such motives only as leave sin in us in its full strength, and do not alter our condition in the sight of God. Herod was just the same man before he cut off John's head.

Ver. 8. *And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.*—There is hardly a more remarkable instance to be met with of the sweetness of revenge, and the strong workings of lust, ambition, and cruelty, than this of Herodias. John would have parted her from Herod; and to glut her eyes with the sight of his head in a dish, was more pleasing to her than all that could be given to her daughter. Besides the evils which fell on Herod and Herodias, on account of this incestuous marriage, it is related of the daughter, that her head was severed from her body by her falling into the ice.—*See* WHITBY.

Ver. 9. *And the King was sorry.*—This is a lively picture of wicked men, doing evil with some check and reluctance, and running themselves upon trouble with their eyes open.

—*Nevertheless for the oath's sake.*—Had he feared an oath, this would have been more religiously broken than kept.

—*And them which sat at meat with him.*—Probably, urging his oath, to make their court to Herodias.

Ver. 13. *And when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.*—What they followed him so eagerly for, we cannot certainly say; it is most probable they were big with the common expectation of his worldly kingdom. We can have no such end in view, and know that we must follow him, and keep close to

him for his heavenly instructions. And, if we do, he has his eye upon us for good, according to what follows.

Ver. 14. *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and healed their sick.*—He also spake to them of the kingdom of heaven, *Luke* ix. 11. He had always the greater mercy in view, relieved their bodies that they might commit their souls to him, and healed *them* that he might heal *us*.

Ver. 15. *This is a desert place.*—So are we by nature. It is a picture of our condition, and the soul's want of Christ's food.

—*Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals.*—Unbelief was still prevalent in the disciples, notwithstanding the miracles they had seen. Let us not deceive ourselves, we are also backward to believe in the power of Jesus; some in their despairing moods, under a deep sense of their guilt and weakness; but the most, because they do not desire to experience it. How is it with *you*, after what you have already heard of him? Do you think worthily of his power? And are you come to a resolution to be helped by him?

Ver. 16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart.*—He was able to provide for them. The words say more to *us;* we *must* not. Our spiritual wants can be supplied no where else; and, if we depart a hair's breadth from him, it is at the hazard of our souls.

—*Give ye them to eat.*—They answered at once, they could not. He will bring thee to this very sight and knowledge of thyself, and draw this confession from thee, before thou hast thy relief from him.

Ver. 18. *He said, Bring them hither to me.*—Now, therefore, hear the words, and bring yourselves to him,

your guilty souls, your wretched impotence. Here the comparison fails; the disciples had some small matter to bring to him, we have nothing.

Ver. 19. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.*—Think you are all now here set down to be fed by him. And O! that you were, in obedience to his command, and with a true hunger for his bread of life!

—*And took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed.*—See the effect of his blessing! Can it be less, now that he is in heaven, where he is interceding for us, and has all blessings in his hands to bestow upon us, if we do but look up to him for them? Learn also from hence to do as he did, to pray over your food, to bless and give thanks.

—*And brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*—So he still conveys his blessings of grace to man by man. This is the order of his appointing, and the method he commonly takes. For though he alone has any thing to give, and he only blesseth what is given, yet he employs others, his ministers, and faithful followers, to dispense it. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst put it into my hand; and, if thou lookest down from heaven, and commandest a blessing, great will be the increase.

Ver. 20. *And they did all eat, and were filled.*—Well, the miracle is apparent; there was enough and to spare for five thousand, out of five loaves and two fishes. What use do you intend to make of this? What is the miracle to you, if you always continue empty, and do not regard it as designed to raise your faith in Christ, and your call to him to receive of his fulness?

LECTURE.

In the former part of this portion of Scripture, we have a lively picture of the strength of natural corruption, and the power of divine grace, in Herod and John. Herod, notwithstanding some uneasy scruples, gives up to death a man whom he knew to be innocent, and regarded as a prophet: John, in discharge of duty, puts his life in his hand, and with undaunted boldness reproves a King for having his brother's wife. See, I say, both what nature and grace can do. The former sacrifices all considerations to its own interests, or a prevailing lust; the latter prefers conscience to life, and without it we none of us know what degree of wickedness we are capable of. Let us not be high-minded, but fear; and, if we have nothing of Herod prevalent in us, and much of John, give the praise where it is due. But I wave this, and proceed to the consideration and improvement of the miracle now before us.

We cannot say of the scripture-miracles that one is greater than another, because they are all equally impossible to man, and all alike possible to God. But we may well suppose, that, besides their general tendency to excite and confirm our belief in Christ, they have some farther design, and carry in them some peculiar instruction. All of them exhibit him to us in his capacity of healing, that is of saving, when applied to the soul; and many, or perhaps all, of them, have their use and benefit in affording matter, particularly arising from them, for our meditation and comfort. In this view we may profitably consider the miracle of the loaves, which has now been brought to your remembrance. The man who has his eyes open, and his heart turned to God in the reading of Scripture, says, "Were the multitude in a desert place,

" and in want of food where none was to be had? So am " I, so is every one by nature, destitute and helpless, " and sure to perish without relief." When the disciples desired Christ to " send the multitude away, that they might go and buy themselves victuals," and he said unto them, " they need not depart, give ye them to eat," their answer to him was to this effect, that what he said was impossible, the provision they had being as nothing to so great a number. Oh! says the awakened man, this is the very answer of my soul to Jesus; I am in a starving condition, I have sins innumerable to be forgiven, a crooked nature to reform, a foul heart to cleanse, and a stubborn will to conquer; and it is not in my own power, nor in the power of man, to supply my wants. He reads on, and hears him saying, Bring them hither to me. He sees him in the very act of commanding the multitude to sit down on the grass, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, looking up to heaven, blessing and breaking them, and distributing them by the hands of his disciples, so that they did all eat, and had enough and to spare. He muses deeply upon all this, and says to himself, they were in want of bodily food, my wants are spiritual; has Jesus no power for me suited to my case? Yes, says he, blessed be God, these things were done and written on purpose " that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we might have life through his name." He came to seek and to save that which was lost; he has all power in heaven and earth given unto him, and is with us alway even unto the end of the world, to feed and support, to bless and comfort his people, to revive their fainting souls, and nourish them to eternal life; and every miracle he wrought is an assurance put into their hands, that he will be their Almighty Helper, and suffer none of them to want what he has to give.

Do not then say, as the disciples did, how can this be?

how can he feed so great a multitude with five loaves and two fishes? Do not say, how can my numberless sins be forgiven? how can my worldly heart be turned to God, how can such a corrupt and weak creature as I am ever attain to holiness? but look unto Jesus. He died for thy sins; he bore them all in his own body on the cross, and God, who laid them upon him, will never lay them again upon any soul which is troubled for them, and turns to him in repentance. And thy Saviour will also be thy strength, and by the grace and power of his Spirit enable thee to live to God in obedience. In all thy straits and difficulties, in the hunger of thy soul, call to mind what thou hast now heard; think who it was that fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and doubt not of his power and will to help thee to the utmost of thy desire. Hast thou any such desire? Art thou sensible of thy poverty and helplessness? Art thou following him for what he has to give thee, and will do for thee, and dost thou see thyself undone without it? Here the matter sticks heavily with us, and we generally live and die unhelped, because we are ignorant of our misery and danger, will not have our eyes opened, and never turn to Jesus with a true prayer for deliverance. But be persuaded, be assured that there is no other way of being Christians, but coming to him hungering and thirsting, in faith and longing for his benefits; to have the guilt of sin removed from our consciences, and the power of it from our hearts; to rejoice in him as our Saviour, and show our love to him, and thankfulness to God for him, by keeping his commandments. Then whatever we read in Scripture will be opened sweetly and powerfully to our hearts, and we shall see our own help and salvation in every chapter of the Gospels. We shall look up to Jesus as now set down at the right hand of God to succour us, beseeching him to look down upon us in mercy, and to

add this to all his other mighty works; and trusting humbly that he will — to give us repentance and forgiveness of sins, to establish our hearts with his peace, to keep us from all evil, to confirm us in all goodness, and bring us to his heavenly kingdom.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might make us the children of God, and heirs of eternal life; we beseech thee turn our eyes and hearts to him as our Saviour and mighty Deliverer. Bless what we have now heard to our instruction and comfort, that, keeping his miracles in remembrance, we may be persuaded of his power to help us, and fly to him for succour in our time of need. And to this end, O Lord, convince us of our misery and danger, poverty and helplessness, that, with earnest desires and feeling hearts, we may ask of him the gift of repentance and forgiveness of sins, be renewed by him to the desire and love of holiness, rejoice in thy peace, and the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given us in him, Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXXI.

St. Matthew, xiv. 23.

He went up into a mountain apart to pray.—For himself, and all mankind; that the good pleasure of the Lord for their salvation might prosper in his hands; that *we* might hear all the words of this book, and live through him. He who came to fulfil all righteousness, could not but be a man of prayer, and was our pattern in this, as well as every other instance of duty and holiness. If *he* needed prayer, how much more do *we*, and how can we ever think ourselves alive unto God without it?

Ver. 24. *The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves.*—It is said, ver. 22. he *constrained* them to get into a ship. Probably the wind was high, and they were not willing to go, or not without him. He forced them into danger, to show them their want of him, and his power in saving them from it. Soul, it is thy condition. If sin brings thee into a storm, see what thou hast to do; cry for deliverance; know thyself and thy Saviour.

Ver. 25. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them.*—In the last of the four watches into which the night was divided; that is to say, in his own time. It is the excellence of faith to leave all to him, and contentedly to wait, in full assurance that he will do every thing for the best.

—*Walking on the sea.*—This was quite unexpected, and so strange to the disciples, that they could not tell how to believe it was he. So we are sometimes ready to think there are insurmountable difficulties in the way of his coming to us; but water, you see, cannot divide betwixt us. Lord, what hast thou not done to raise our faith, and encourage our trust in thee?

Ver. 27. *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.*—This is the very thing we have to learn, and what all Scripture is intended to bring us to; to know Jesus, and, in the faith of him, to dismiss our fears, and come boldly to the throne of grace. And great will be our comfort, when, after all our trouble for sin, all our mistakes and misapprehensions of Christ, and all our false methods of healing ourselves, we hear and receive this saying, "Be of good cheer, it is I," who am your only helper and all-sufficient Saviour; sinner as thou art, "be not afraid."

Ver. 28. *And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water*—Not doubting

but he could, at his bidding. So he might, if he had known more of Christ and himself.

Ver. 29. *And he said, Come.*—Whatever you may think of your unfitness, he also says *Come* to you, as certainly as he did to Peter.

—*And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.*—Here was a high degree of faith, and venturing a good deal in the strength of it. Nevertheless, it failed in the end. What reason have we to pray continually, Lord, make us sensible of our weakness, increase our faith, increase our dependence on thee, that we may be supported in all our trials?

Ver. 30. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid.*—Ah! we have great cause of fear in ourselves, and when we look only at ourselves, our hearts cannot but fail us.

—*And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*—He does, he will; if, like Peter, we implore his help when we are brought into straits, and find ourselves beginning to waver. If we cry, "Lord, save!" we shall not sink.

Ver. 31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.*—See the very hand that is ready to be stretched forth to snatch us all out of the gulf of sin and misery we are fallen into.

—*And said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*—Let him not say this of thee. To all thy other sins, add not that of unbelief; for then nothing can save thee. After all thou hast heard of him, ask thyself, Wherefore dost thou doubt?

Ver. 32. *And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*—Lord, come into us, and speak peace to our souls. We are in continual danger upon the waves of this troublesome world; but, if thou art with us, we shall pass safely through them, be refreshed with thy comforts, and brought to our desired haven.

Ver. 33. *Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*— To bring us to this confession, is the end of all his miracles; that acknowledging him to be the Son of God, we may honour him as God, fly to his mercy, and rejoice in his salvation. But how can this be, if we know not what his salvation is, what we are, and why we want it?

Ver. 35. *And when the men of that place had knowledge of him.*— Have not we? I mean, as cleansing us from the guilt of sin, purifying our hearts by faith, and clothing us with his perfect righteousness. For this is the knowledge we *should* have of him, this is his salvation.

—*They sent out into all that country round about.*— They were desirous that all, far and near, should have the benefit of his presence with them. Every one who knows how great a good he is to mankind, and how necessary to them as their spiritual Physician, has the same desire, and endeavours to bring as many to him as he can.

—*And brought unto him all that were diseased*— Such he invites to come to him now, and none but such ever do. You may think you come to him, and own him as your Saviour, because you have been taught to think and say so; but you can no more come to him for your souls without knowing them to be sick, than you would apply to a Physician for a bodily cure, when you know yourselves to be in perfect health.

Ver. 36. *And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*— Their faith was great, and the success answerable to it, as it always will; for no request of a true faith is ever denied. It is a healing, happy time with us, when we thus come to Jesus, longing for his help, and say, with an earnest faith, "if I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made perfectly whole."

LECTURE.

THE last time I observed to you, that, besides the chief intent of Christ's miracles to engage our belief in him, they generally carry in them some particular instruction; so that the believer, whatever state he is in, will find some or other of them peculiarly suited to his case, and be enabled to derive support and comfort from them. Many a soul, in the confidence of an untried faith, thinks itself ready, like Peter, to venture upon seeming impossibilities; but when it is brought into unusual straits, and sees the wind boisterous, is overcome with fear, and begins to sink. What is to be done in this extremity? Is faith quite gone and all lost? No; the instruction here is to cry out, Lord, save me; Lord, rebuke my unbelief; thou canst forgive my doubts, and speak down all my fears, and so long as there is truth in thy word, or compassion in thy heart, I will never forget the out-stretched hand. And that we might not forget how ready he is to save, nor doubt of his power, nor fear to put ourselves into his hands, every chapter and every portion of the Gospels is a repetition of his grace and goodness, and proclaims him as the Saviour of mankind. We should, therefore, dwell upon his precious character with delight, follow him with deep attention and fulness of belief, from one miracle to another, and never be weary of inculcating the great design, or particular instruction of them, upon our own souls. Blessed be God, we have now been reading that when the diseased "besought him, that they might only touch the hem of his garment, as many as touched were made perfectly whole." The words are still sounding in your ears, that you may have your portion in them, and be made perfectly whole;

that is, in the spiritual application of them, or sense in which they can belong to us, by Christ and his righteousness, which alone is perfect, and, therefore, by which alone we are reputed just before God, and perfectly whole. If the sense of your wants brings you to Jesus, he is always near to you; and, according to your faith, and the desire of your hearts, so will it be done unto you. You cannot, indeed, touch the hem of his garment, but he is still at hand to heal all the diseases of your souls.

What is the thought, what is the prayer of your hearts day by day; if he was present in person, what would you ask of him? Would you say to him, Lord, I am a sinful creature, have mercy on me; I am blind and ignorant, instruct and guide; I am a weak creature, and ready to sink at every turn, do thou hold me up, support and strengthen me? If you do not thus think and judge of yourselves, what have you to do with Jesus, what has he done for you? Be not therefore deceived. Do not put a vain form of religion, a faint wish of salvation, or a civil, quiet life, in the place of Christ's work. We must not be ignorant either of what he has done for us, or has to do in us. When we were perishing in sin, and must have been lost for ever without him, he died to save us. He took our sins upon himself, and bore them in his own body, that they might never rise up in judgment against us. Do you understand and believe this? Have your eyes been opened to see what an evil and a curse there is in sin, and what an unhappy condition you are in by reason of sin, when Christ must suffer the vengeance that was due to it before it could be forgiven? Do you say to yourself, What should I have done but for Christ, and how should I ever have been able to silence my doubts, and quiet my guilty fears, if he had not established my peace on sure grounds? And are you, indeed, settled in this belief, with thankfulness to God, that for his sake

you are freed from condemnation, making it the anchor of your soul, and the joy of your heart, and determining to know nothing for life, but Christ and him crucified? This sounds well; and now you see the almighty arm of his grace stretched out for your deliverance.

But you must not stop here; you must go on, and say, Christ, in giving himself up for sinners, has done a mighty work for me, far beyond my deserts, far beyond any thing I could conceive, or hope for, and this shall be the refuge and stay of my soul; but in return for his love, and with a view to my happiness, he has his demand upon me for a grateful, unreserved submission to the work he has to do in me. I have an earthly, carnal heart, and naturally desire worldly things and a worldly happiness; I have a proud heart to be humbled; I have a dark heart, and am backward to admit the light which cometh from above; I have a stubborn will, opposing itself to the will and law of God: Lord Jesus, says the awakened man, help here. Enlighten my dark mind, quicken my dead heart, conquer my rebellious will, humble me in the dust, turn me to God as my Lord and portion, set my affections on things above, make me thy disciple in the truth and purity of a free obedience. Let not my faith fail me, and I am sure thou wilt not. Dearly beloved, so Christ is received and believed in by all whom he saves. He convinces them of their guilt and danger, turns their eyes to him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, grounds them in his love, and this belief binds them to his service. The Lord carry you beyond all forms into the depth of this work. It is said, when the men of that place "had knowledge of him," viz. that he who wrought such miracles was come among them, "they sent into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment." Do you, who have know-

ledge of him, are baptized into the belief of him, and hear of him continually, bring yourselves, your diseased, guilty, helpless souls, to him, with a full persuasion of your want of such a Saviour, and of his will to save you, that this Scripture may also be fulfilled in you—"as many as touched were made perfectly whole." The words seem to imply that those who so touched him were strong in faith, and had a very high opinion of his power to help them. I do not mean that he has not healing for the least degree of a true faith; but whatever it is, let us pray to the Lord for the increase of it.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, who didst look upon us in mercy when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and sent thy only begotten Son to help and to save us; bring us, we beseech thee, to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee; that, knowing thee as a reconciled Father, we may serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness before thee all the days of our life. Enlighten our dark minds, bend our stubborn wills, quicken our dead hearts. Suffer us not to be the most unhappy of all creatures, either by despising the offer of thy great mercy, or living unreformed under it. Fill us with devout admiration of thy goodness, and inspire us with a holy resolution of securing our portion in thee, through the Son of thy love. Let the desire of our souls be to Jesus, that being made perfectly whole by him, we may bless and praise thee the God of our salvation, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

SECTION XXXII.

St. Matthew, xv. 1.

Then came to Jesus the Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem.—Here was a kind of solemn embassy of learned doctors, to inquire into his conduct. And what was the matter? His disciples did not wash before they ate. You will find he takes occasion from hence to lay open the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and charge them with the neglect of what was more substantial. And what you are to observe for yourselves is, the vanity and wretched deceit of resting in the use of outward means, or being scrupulous about them, when the great end of bringing the heart nearer to God by them is overlooked.

Ver. 2. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?*—The Jewish traditions were of their own invention, mere will-worship, superadded to the written word; and, as appears from this passage, preferred to it. It is, therefore, probable that Christ had instructed his disciples to disregard them.

—*For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*—Outward things are comparatively easy, and cost but little; and nothing blinds us more with regard to our state than the most exact observation of them, where inward purity is neglected. Be not deceived. This is the way of men at all times. Take heed it be not yours. You value yourselves upon your baptism, come to church on Sundays, and sometimes receive the sacrament: Well, the hand is washed; but is this all that Christ has to do in you? And will he require nothing else of you at the day of judgment? You are convinced at once that you must not abide by this plea. What then are you doing in

religion? Have you an eye continually to your hearts, and is the cry of them for Christ's cleansing?

Ver. 3. *Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*—Whoever they are that transgress, much more live in the breach of any one of the commandments, and upon whatever pretence they do it, the question is to them from Christ's own mouth, and it behoves them to consider what answer they will give to it, "Why do you transgress?"

Ver. 4. *For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and he that curseth father or mother.*—Our Lord has before opened three of the commandments, chap. v. to guide us in the understanding of them all, and to show what a depth of spiritual meaning they have. I suppose him here to comment upon the fifth commandment in the same manner, and that his design is to lay the rule to the heart, and charge it with the guilt of cursing father or mother, when they are not succoured. In effect, how could we curse them more? It is for want of knowing the commandments in their true meaning and full extent, that many are ignorant of their state, and, priding themselves in the decency of an outward character, are so hard to be convinced of their sin and want of a Saviour. Whereas others, who learn of Christ to measure themselves by his standard, and trace sin up to the heart, can see their manifold defects, sue for mercy unfeignedly, apply their endeavours in the right place, and pray devoutly for the Spirit's help.

—*Let him die the death.*—This is God's law, and God's justice, at all times. Though human laws neither do, nor can, take exact cognizance of this and other breaches of duty to parents, yet, in the judgment of God, those who do not support them in their distress, deserve death as much as a murderer.

Ver. 5. *It is a gift*, &c.—God rejects with scorn whatever we give him to another's wrong.

Ver. 8. *Their heart is far from me.*—And, therefore, the *man;* for nothing draws nigh truly to God but the heart. The next time you pray, think what you are doing. Think what end you propose to yourself in your whole religion, and what it can be good for, if it does not bring the heart to God for that rest which it wants, and can find no where but in him.

Ver. 9. *But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*—And adhering strictly to them, so as to vacate a known command of God. This was horrid presumption; and, therefore, no wonder that all the worship of such men is declared to be vain. To worship God in vain, is unhappy indeed; and to lose that labour, is of all errors the most to be dreaded.

Ver. 10. *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand.*—It is observable that he spoke to "the multitude." He endeavoured to undeceive *them;* they *could* hear; but the Scribes and Pharisees were above his teaching, and left to their own blindness. God deliver us from so great a curse, and give us grace to hear and understand the instruction! For he sets a mark of importance upon it: "he called" to the multitude, and said to them, as he now does to us, "hear and understand."

Ver. 11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man.*—A little dirt or soil from the hands, in eating.

—*But that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*—Coming from a rotten heart, as you will hear presently.

Ver. 12. *Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended,* &c.—To hear their traditions slighted, and themselves charged with the breach of God's commands. What!

they transgressors? Take heed. The Pharisee lies close at the heart; and, if you will not see your sin, you will certainly be offended with the man that tells you of it.

Ver. 13. *Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*—He speaks rather of their persons as men, than of their office as teachers; though that too was upon the point of expiring. Let it be our great inquiry, whether we are of God's planting, or not. We are only so, when we are implanted into Christ: believing in him for life, and manifesting it by our works.

Ver. 14. *Let them alone.*—Have nothing to do with them; leave them to themselves; follow them not.

—*They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*—My friends, I have a word to say to you upon this: if your *leader* should be blind, *you* need not, so long as you have the Bible. Take it for your guide, hear Christ speaking in it, never take it into your hands, without a prayer to have it opened to you, and set home upon your hearts, and if all the world should be blind about you, it is impossible you should ever fall into the ditch, either of ignorance here, or perdition hereafter.

Ver. 15. *Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.*—And will he leave you in darkness, if you make the same request to him?

Ver. 16. *Are ye also yet without understanding?*—Verse the eleventh is very plain; and well might he say this. Nevertheless, Peter's dulness of apprehension, and St. Matthew's own, is not concealed. For Christ answers Peter as if he spoke in the name of them all. Who would have written this of himself, and his associates in a divine mission, if God had not guided his finger? But now observe the rebuke for yourselves. All is told, all is explained to us; and, if we do not understand, what can

it be owing to but a heedless, graceless spirit, and great unconcern for ourselves?

Ver. 19. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, &c.*—The meaning is, not so much that these things, wherever they appear, are first in the heart; but that they are the natural issue of a heart naturally corrupt, and more in every man's heart than he thinks of. The commands would be as grateful to us, as food is to the appetite, if the inward sense was not depraved. And it is farther observable, that a resistance and aversion from them still continues, notwithstanding a settled judgment and conviction of their excellence. Hear this, O ye blind assertors of man's dignity, and the natural integrity of the human heart.

Ver. 20. *These are the things which defile a man.*—Now, therefore, hear and understand. These, these are the things which defile us, render us loathsome in the eyes of God, and destroy our peace, make us a burden to ourselves, and a plague to others! This is the misery from which Christ came to save us; and, if the ground which produces these fruits, the evil heart, is not seen and lamented, and given up to the grace and power of God in Christ, it will be our defilement and curse for ever.

LECTURE.

It is certainly a matter of the last importance to understand what are the things which defile and render us loathsome in the sight of God. Let me, therefore, upon occasion of what you have now heard, speak a few words to you concerning your inward work under Christ. He says, "Hear and understand;" calling upon every one of us to observe and consider how necessary it is that

we should keep a watchful eye upon the state of our hearts, and apply our endeavours of reformation in the right place. Think what end you propose to yourselves in religion, and what it can be good for, if it does not bring you to God for his work in and upon the heart. For there he looks for the good or evil that is in us; and, if we do not follow him thither, we are hidden from ourselves, and acting all our lives upon a mistake. It is not washing the hand, or a decent outside; it is not our baptism, nor customary attendance upon divine worship, though ever so exact, nor looking fair in the eye of the world, that will afford us any proof of the goodness of our state. We must look well to our inward ground, and know whether we are kept to our duty, and restrained from doing ill, by the fear of God, and a sincere desire to please him, or for such reasons only as leave sin in its strength, and do not alter our condition in the sight of God. And to this end we must be well aware that as every command of God is laid upon the heart, so in our examination of ourselves we must have an especial regard to the state of the heart, and judge ourselves according to what we find there, and not according to what we do, or appear before men. I repeat it again, it is for want of knowing the commandments in their true meaning and full extent, that so many are ignorant of their condition, and, priding themselves in the decency of an outward character, are so hard to be convinced of their sin, and want of a Saviour. How is it possible, when, judging of themselves all their lives by a false rule, they think they are whole? Whereas others, who learn of Christ to measure themselves by his standard, and trace sin up to the heart, can see their manifold defects, sue for mercy unfeignedly, and pray devoutly to be strengthened for all duty, and against all sin.

When, therefore, you hear Christ saying—"out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"—be persuaded to think of yourself, and to bring your own state under examination. And when you do, without guile and hypocrisy, and with the right rule of judging in your hand, you will perceive that there is a great deal more of the detestable sins here mentioned, and a greater proneness to all manner of evil in the hearts and souls of all men, than you were aware of. When you consider the divine law, as reaching the heart and all its motions, and that nature is as far corrupt as it stands in opposition to it, or refuses compliance with it, in its full sense, strictness, and purity, you will be no longer able to palliate the horrible defect of your own, and see the necessity of its being brought before God in repentance, of your being absolved from its guilt by an act of pardoning grace, and renewed by his Spirit. And till you admit the light of Scripture in this leading point of the great and general corruption of man's nature, you will, of course, be blind to the great design of it, as a revelation of mercy, and from time to time confess yourself a miserable sinner without feeling and without meaning. You may, perhaps, receive Christ as a teacher and example, but reject him, as too many do, in his principal character of Redeemer, and disown his propitiatory death, together with your need of supernatural assistance to cleanse your heart, and change the evil bent of your affections.

Let us then learn, from this passage of Scripture, how apt men are to deal deceitfully with God and their souls; and to pride themselves in doing some trifling things, instead of having a conscientious, universal regard to his holy commands. Thus the Pharisees thought it a high point of religion to wash their hands before meat, without considering what a foul inside they had; and to devote

some part of their substance to God, though in so doing they left father and mother to starve. You may not offend just in the same particulars, but the same kind of deceit too often lies lurking at the heart; and you may, in other respects, mock God, and cheat yourselves with the shadow instead of the substance. So if a man should say, I have been baptized, I go to church, and generally to the sacrament, I say my prayers, and give alms according to my ability, which is more than many can say, and yet continue as much a worldling as ever, never know the work of a true repentance, nor come to that faith which purifieth the heart, he is such a Pharisee, and self-deceiver, as we have now been reading of. He honoureth God with his lips, but his heart is far from him, and all the while he worships him in vain. We are willing to suppose, in our own defence, that there never were such Pharisees as are described in the Gospels any where, but among the Jews, and that we are not concerned in the censure passed upon them. But certain it is that they were uncommonly strict in the performance of religious duties; and, if their hypocrisy consisted chiefly in thinking themselves just before God, as it appears they did, it behoves us to consider whether we are not infected with their pride of self-exaltation, and liable to the same charge of hypocrisy, if, like them, we either substitute outward practices in the room of inward, pure conformity to the will of God, or pretend to justification for any thing we do. Let us pray to be delivered from this deceit, and to have the truth opened to our hearts.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; so work upon and prepare our hearts, that we may fear nothing so much as to offend thee, desire nothing so

much as to please thee, and be disposed in all things to obey thy blessed will. Thy commands are pure, thy law is holy, and just, and good; thou hast ordained it for our great benefit, and we are only miserable by transgressing it, and can never be happy but in conforming to it. Teach us to reverence thy word and will; teach us this wisdom, and guide our souls into the way of truth and purity. O! be thou the sole Lord, and supreme love of our hearts, and bring every thought into subjection to thee. And, that we may attain to this holy and happy state of a pure and free obedience, let thy love in Jesus Christ be always present to our minds, and lively in our hearts; that so we may be constrained to live unto him that died for us, by his rule, after his example, to thy glory. O Lord, for his sake, have mercy on us, and help us; pardon all our failings, supply all our wants, that being renewed to the desire and love of holiness, we may be found of thee in peace, and received to thy mercy in Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XXXIII.

St. Matthew, xv. 22.

A woman of Canaan, &c. — One *out* of God's covenant. Hast thou alienated thyself from him since thy baptism? And dost thou begin to feel thy sin, and find thyself in an evil case, helpless and undone? Cry, *have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!* Does he give no answer? Still cry after him. Does he give a seeming denial? Draw still nearer to him, and worship him. Does he speak roughly? Own it to be just; but still plead for the leavings of his bounty. Resolve to take no denial; he wants to have thee at this point with him; and will no

more reject thee, than thou couldst bear to see the tears running down the cheeks of thy own child, and leave it to perish with hunger.

Ver. 28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith.*—What was her faith? She wanted help for her daughter, and believed in Jesus for it. This is always faith; and, if Jesus is always the same, will always have its relief from him. But then do not think you have faith in him, when you have no workings towards it, nor ground for it in yourselves; no heartfelt sense of your sinful state, and want of remission; no real desire to do the will of God as he shall teach you, nor of his power in you to subdue your corruptions. For this, and nothing but this, is his office in us, and our redemption by him; and all that do not believe in him, and come to him for this end, their faith is vain, they are yet in their sins.

—*Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*—If you knew you might have your wish, what would you ask of God? Let me beg of you to consider whether you ever thought of this in your whole lives. If not, you are in the darkness of a natural state, without knowledge, or desire, of the one thing needful, and never prayed yet according to the will of God. For, if you were truly awakened, you would say at once, give me Christ; give me the Spirit to guide me into all saving truth; give me an obedient will, and heavenly affections. This you may have; this prayer will be heard; this hunger will be satisfied. On the contrary, if you choose to be empty, and do not desire that Christ should take possession of your souls, so you remain; your own will must take place.

Ver. 28. *And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*—Ask yourselves, one by one, is this for me, and may I take comfort from it? Will Christ make me whole, cleanse me from my sin, and turn my heart to

God? Blessed God! what learning, what comfort is there in thy holy Scriptures! and what sweetness may we draw from them, if we thus read them?

Ver. 30. *And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, &c.*—You are the lame, till he sets your feet at liberty to run the way of God's commandments; you are blind, if you do not see your sin; you are dumb, if you have not a tongue to pray, and praise God with; you are maimed as to any help in yourselves.

—*And cast them down at Jesus's feet, and he healed them.* Now, therefore, cast yourselves down at Jesus's feet, that he may work the spiritual cure, and remove from you the plague of an evil heart and an evil conscience.

Ver. 31. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered.*—He does not want stupid, unfeeling admiration from us; but to excite in us a belief of his power and goodness, that we may desire to experience them in ourselves, and glorify the God of Israel by our conversion.

Ver. 32. *I have compassion on the multitude.*—They seem to have been insensible of their own hunger, out of desire to be with him; but he was not unmindful of any of their wants.

Ver. 33. *Whence should we have so much bread, &c.*—Who could be slower of belief than the disciples were? They had just faith enough not to desert Christ, and that was all. After the day of Pentecost all their doubts were at an end; and it is very remarkable, that they were more steady from a faith of the Spirit's operation, than from their own eye-sight.

Ver. 38. *And they that did eat were four thousand, &c.*—Let not this second miracle of feeding the multitude be read without effect. When you know of a truth what your work is, and your own utter inability to accomplish it, you will be apt to say, Whence can this be? How

shall such a weak creature as I am be strengthened for it, and carried happily through it? The answer is here; by that Jesus, who supplied the wants of above five thousand at one time, and four thousand at another, by an act of his almighty power.

LECTURE.

In the story of the woman of Canaan, you must needs observe the nature and power of faith. In her, it was persevering trust in Christ, notwithstanding the discouraging repulses she met with, that he would cast the devil out of her daughter; in us, it is an unshaken belief in him, grounded on his word, not that he will cure our bodily distempers, but that, according to his name, he will do much greater things for us, in saving us from our sins. To this faith every thing will be granted; and, as sure as the Lord Jesus Christ said at that time, "be it unto thee even as thou wilt," so surely will he say the same to every one of us, when we trust in his grace and power, see ourselves undone without his blessed relief, and are so desirous of it as to take no denial. I beseech you, consider; St. Matthew was not directed by the Spirit of God to write this account of the Canaanitish woman with all its circumstances, only that you might know how she came to Jesus in her distress, what she said to him, and how she found a cure for her daughter; but that all who read or hear it might see their own help in it, come to him with the same faith, be as earnest with him for their own healing, and, according to the particular instruction contained in the relation of the miracle, persist, like her, in looking for it at his hands. For this end, I say, the Gospels were written, that we

might believe in him as the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, offering himself to us in every miracle he wrought as the all-sufficient Helper of mankind at all times, and by his cures on the bodies of men giving us a pledge and assurance of our spiritual recovery; though not in the manner we think, or may have been taught to expect, by a particular, sensible testimony to the soul, yet certainly in his own time and way, which it is the property of a true faith to leave to him, in full dependence on his truth, wisdom, and goodness.

If the Scripture is not thus opened to us, if it does not bring us to Jesus as our only Helper in the distress and peril of our souls, it is no more to us than any other book. It can signify nothing to us what he did for others above seventeen hundred years ago, if he does nothing for us, if he has not his eyes still upon us, and the same compassionate heart toward us, you and me at this time and place; and that more especially as we are all perishing without him, and must be miserable for ever if he does not help and save us. Well now, supposing him to be present, as indeed he is, with the same bowels of melting pity which brought him into the world to die for you, what would you say to him, what would you ask of him? Would you say to him, Lord, I am a wretched, sinful creature, have mercy on me and help me, give me repentance, wash me in thy blood, be thou my advocate with the Father for pardon and life, send the Spirit of grace into my heart to make me a new man in faith and holiness? Has the Lord given you such an understanding of the danger of your condition, as that you make it your request to him day by day, and would think yourselves undone if you did not believe it would be granted? If not, what is Jesus to you? And what better

are you for being baptized, and called by his name, or for reading and hearing of his mighty works one chapter and one time after another, if you do not come to him with your own case, tell him of your wants, put in for your share of his benefits, and hope to find him your Saviour? The woman of Canaan cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my "daughter is grievously vexed with a devil;" have you no need of the Son of David, no sin to be forgiven, no corruption to be cast out? See, therefore, what it is that keeps you from Jesus, and seals you up in blindness all your lives. You speak peace to yourselves in a form of religion, and that a poor one at the best. You set an unreasonable value upon a decent, civil behaviour, and, if you can but maintain a tolerably fair character, and justify yourselves to men, you look no farther; you do not really believe the Scripture when it tells us that we are naturally in a state of corruption and condemnation, and that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" in a word, you have no true feeling of the danger of sin, nor sense of the greatness of your own, and so never cry unto Jesus for his salvation from it.

I allow as much to the sacrament of baptism as you can desire, think it a glorious, high privilege, and am thankful to God for my own; but do not understand how you and I can keep it, if we are not established in the belief of the peculiar truths, and great blessings of Christ's religion, praying, working, living with God according to it, laying hold on his covenant of peace every one of us for ourselves, humbly acknowledging our daily want of forgiveness, desert of condemnation, and the riches of his grace. You say, as often as we meet in this place, that you are miserable sinners, and that there is no health in you; but with respect to the generality, it is because the words are put into your mouths. If they came from your

hearts, the offer of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin would be glad tidings to you; and when you read of great multitudes of lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, being cast down at Jesus's feet and healed by him, you too would cast yourselves down at his feet, and when you were recovered by him to the faith and hope of a Christian state, give glory to the God of Israel. When you read of his multiplying seven loaves, and a few little fishes, to satisfy the hunger of four thousand men, besides women and children, you would rejoice to think you had such a Saviour to supply your wants, to satisfy all the desires of your souls, and nourish you to everlasting life. Now, therefore, hear and understand what is written for your instruction and great comfort. Bring yourselves to him with unfeigned desire of his blessings: bring your sin-polluted souls, your wretched weakness. Think you are now here set down to be fed by him, in obedience to his command, and with a true hunger for his bread of life; and do not suppose that he has less love, or less power, now that he is in heaven, where he is interceding for us, and has all blessings in his hands. The Lord put it into our hearts to look up to him for them!

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who hast given us thy Son to purge our sins, and heal all the diseases of our souls; give us also, we beseech thee, the will to be healed. And to this end, send down the Holy Spirit into our hearts to convince us of sin. Discover to us the charge that is against us; that, knowing our guilt, we may fly to the Saviour in the peril of our souls, and persevere in seeking our relief at his hands. Lord, help our unbelief; and, as thou hast in mercy caused the miracles of Jesus to be recorded for the assurance of our faith, assist us with thy grace to

receive the benefit of them, by a full trust in him, as always present to hear the cry of our hearts, and help us in every need. We are utterly unworthy of the least of thy mercies, and the sight of our great defilement in sin is apt to hinder us from approaching thee, and to work against its own relief. But, O Lord, thou knowest we have nothing to plead but our unworthiness, and thou callest us to believe in hope against hope. Let the sense of thy goodness be above all our fears, and work in us that blessed faith to which thou hast here given an answer of peace for the comfort of every believer — "be "it unto thee even as thou wilt." Even so, blessed God, confirm the word to us; that, having thy love continually before our eyes, we may walk with thee in the obedience of faith, serve thee with thankful hearts all the days of our lives, and be accepted to thy mercy, for the sake, and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XXXIV.

St. Matthew, xvi. 1.

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came — Men of opposite principles, but good friends upon this occasion, and joining cordially against Christ. The world is always the same; and those who are of it, though they can agree in nothing else, are always united in the same design of running down the truth, and opposing the power of godliness, as it is in Jesus.

— *And tempting* — Thinking to try his power to the utmost, and not doubting but he would fail in the attempt. When we have no mind to be convinced, we are always calling for further evidence.

—*Desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.*—Probably they meant, such as Moses' darkness, &c. Joshua's hailstones, Elijah's rain. In comparison of these, they pretended to undervalue his miracles of healing, and would not see the finger of God in them.

Ver. 2. *Ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red,* &c.—Natural knowledge, or acuteness, and spiritual discernment, are different things; and the pride of the former often excludes the latter.

Ver. 3. *O ye hypocrites.*—Pretending a zeal for God, and regard for truth, but, unknown to themselves, inwardly averse from both.

—*Can ye not discern the signs of the times?*—They might, if they had been willing. Though he appeared at that time foretold by the prophets, and they themselves expected the coming of the Messiah just about that time, notwithstanding the preaching of John Baptist, his own miracles and doctrine, their hearts were shut against him; and, therefore, no proof was sufficient to open their eyes. Good Lord, direct us to the cause of our standing out against thee. Yea, thou dost here lead us to the root of all our hardness and unbelief; it is an evil and adulterous heart, divorcing itself from God, and cleaving to the world.

Ver. 4. *There shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.*—In his resurrection. No sign from heaven, in their sense, but as great and convincing as any sign from heaven could be.

—*And he left them, and departed.*—How dreadful! What are we, when Christ leaves us? It is just as if the sun was to fall from heaven all at once. This is your own condition, and the darkness that is upon your souls is greater than can be expressed, if you are not yet come to him. For it is all one, whether he leaves *us*, or we keep ourselves from *him*. Examine yourselves, What do you

want from him? What has he done, what one thing did you ever desire him to do for you; saying to him, with a feeling heart, and as earnest a prayer as if your life depended upon it, Lord, help me?

Ver. 6. *Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees.* — The Pharisees, though strict in their principles, were proud, self-conceited, and self-justified; and as such, all they did, or could do, was to make clean the outside of the cup. The Sadducees were loose in their notions of religion. He bids them beware of both. You know that leaven works the whole lump into its own nature. It is, therefore, of great consequence to us what doctrines we admit.

Ver. 7. *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.* — What slowness of apprehension and incredulity in the disciples! Whence could it be, but because the Spirit was not yet given?

Ver. 8. *Which when Jesus perceived.* — He does not want to be told what is in our hearts. We know this, and yet have no dread of his piercing eye.

— *He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?* — Observe the cause of our misunderstanding, or reasoning wrong about what he says to us; it is the defect or want of faith.

Ver. 11. *How is it that ye do not understand?* — Does he say this of you? Do you understand what he would have you to understand of himself and his doctrine? If not, what is it owing to? Do you use the means to understand, reading, hearing, meditation, conference, prayer, and all in sincerity?

LECTURE.

WHEN we read this passage of Scripture, and hear our Lord saying to his disciples, and in them to all, "Beware "of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees," meaning by that their doctrine, we must needs be convinced that it is matter of great concernment to us what doctrines we admit. The Sadducees held that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; and, as they had no belief, nor hope in a life to come, we may suppose they gave themselves up to the full enjoyment of this world in all the ways they could think of. They were, therefore, loose in their principles; and it certainly behoves all who desire to please God, and are concerned for their souls, to beware of the poison of their doctrine. The Pharisees, on the contrary, not only believed a life to come, but were very strict in their notions, and practice of external duties, scrupulous in the payment of their tithes, fasted and made long prayers, you would be surprised to hear how long and how many every day. What then was it in them and their doctrine that we have need to beware of, and wherein did the great error of it consist? Why, it was truly what it is here called, *leaven;* it puffed them up with a very high conceit of themselves and their own righteousness, as if they merited heaven by it, and soured them against all the rest of mankind as unclean in comparison of themselves, and outcasts from the favour of God.

It is hard to say which of these doctrines is most contrary to truth, or most mischievous in itself. For, if we entertain the opinion of the Sadducees and disbelieve a future state, we have nothing to restrain us from living as we please, and are let loose to all manner of wickedness. On the other hand, if we swell with pride

and self-conceit, as the Pharisees did, on account of any goodness or worthiness of our own, as if we could challenge God with it, and bid defiance to his justice, we are hypocrites and liars, self-deceivers, and enemies to the cross of Christ. Let us then, according to our Lord's teaching and advice, take heed and beware of both these errors. Let us look for his coming from heaven to reward his faithful followers, and take vengeance on those who know not God, and do not obey the Gospel; that we may be prepared for his coming, by living in dutiful subjection to him. And whatever we are, or do, let us not be such hypocrites, so utterly blind, foolish, and unbelieving, as to make it the ground of our confidence towards God, or right to eternal life. For we are all not only unprofitable servants, but miserable sinners; and when we have done all we can, and the very best we ever shall do, must come short of acceptance, if we do not make the blood and righteousness of the Saviour our refuge from the guilt that is upon us, and our great hope in that day of trial when God shall judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. Blessed be God that in him we have a right to the Psalmist's plea, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified!"

When Christ had charged the disciples to take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and perceived what a childish construction they put upon his words, as if he was displeased with them for not having provided a sufficient quantity of bread for him and themselves; he said to them, "O ye of little faith, do ye not yet understand?"—and at the same time reminded them of the two miracles he had wrought for the support of great multitudes, and of which they had just been eye-witnesses. Their unbelief is astonishing, and we can hardly conceive how they could be so slow of

understanding. But are you really surprised at it? Turn your eyes inward, and ask the question for yourselves one by one, whether the many miracles you have heard in the course of this Gospel have convinced you of the power of Jesus, and brought you to faith in him? What they saw is related to you on their testimony, confirmed with their blood, and to which you have no objection; and yet it may be said, if Christ was present, he would say to many of you, How is it that ye do not understand? Why do ye not believe? That the disciples were grossly mistaken about the meaning of his words, you hear, and cannot help understanding; but if you are serious readers of Scripture, you will not stop here, but take occasion from hence to consider what knowledge you have of Christ's doctrine upon the whole, and whether you are grounded in the belief of its chief articles. You may have understanding and acuteness enough in other matters, as Christ observed, in the beginning of the chapter, the Pharisees and Sadducees had; but the great interesting point is your discernment of spiritual things, the knowledge you have gained of Christ, and coming to him for life. Oh! Why do not your own hearts rise up against you for not taking some pains, and using proper means to come to the truth? When you have this blessed book put into your hands, hear it opened from time to time, and have the great truths of God for your salvation continually sounded in your ears, why do ye not understand what it so much concerns you to know? Why will you always be taking up one vain plea or another against yourselves, as a cover for your ignorance and unbelief? Why will you not be better informed, when the choice is for life or death, heaven or hell? Let me tell you this day for your comfort and encouragement, and I pray God it may not be to your everlasting confusion, that the whole of our religion is contained in a little compass,

and may be summed up in these three particulars: forgiveness of sins upon repentance, a right to eternal life by Jesus Christ, and sincere obedience to him in the faith of his love. If you are self-justified, and say with the Pharisee, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are; or, as another did, What lack I yet? — if you trust in a form of religion, decency of character, strictness of life, or any thing of your own, as much or more than you do in Christ, — you are miserably deceived; the doctrine of forgiveness and peace with God is slighted by you, and, whatever you pretend, you do not believe in him. And, if you say in your hearts, as the Sadducees did, that there is no resurrection, no future reckoning, no life to come, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," you deny all Scripture, you can have no right or portion in the Son of God, either in the present enjoyment of his salvation, or his everlasting kingdom of glory hereafter. For it is the great joy of believers to look for his coming; and he lived, died, and rose again, to bring us all happily to that time. Let us pray that God would establish us in his truth, and enable us to walk in the light of it.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast given unto us thy holy word to guide us into all saving truth; give us grace to receive it in the love thereof, and send thy Holy Spirit to make it light and truth in our hearts. Let thy Son Jesus Christ, therein revealed to us for pardon and life, be our refuge against the fear of condemnation, the anchor of our souls, our joy and hope, and the Lord our righteousness. Make us to know that no man cometh unto thee, to the true knowledge of thee, and to thy favour here, nor to thy glory hereafter, but by him. And grant, we beseech thee, that our faith in him may have its perfect work, by being fruitful in all holy obedience, and turning our hearts to

thee in love, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us; that when he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, we may be found of thee in peace, and received to thy mercy, for the sake, and through the alone merits of the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXXV.

St. Matthew, xvi. 13.

Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?—That Son of man in an eminent sense, him seen by Daniel, vii. 13. our spiritual Father, the head of a new race of children, and the restorer of mankind to their first happy state in God, uniting them to himself by faith, and himself to them by the Spirit.

Ver. 14. *Some say that thou art John the Baptist, &c.* —It matters not what this or that man says. What is our own knowledge and belief of Christ, and how far is it wrought into the habit of our souls? Nothing else can do us any good.

Ver. 15. *He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*— Have *you* the answer ready?

Ver. 16. *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.*—Lord, help here. Here is the greatest of all blessings presented to our view. Now, now prove and search us with this word.

Ver. 17. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*—Flesh and blood never revealed this to any man. We may, by teaching, inquiry, and consideration of proofs, be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, and we should be very unreasonable if we were

not; but his being revealed, and embraced as a Saviour, giving rest to the conscience, and purifying the heart unto obedience and love of the truth, is the work of God in every man; and when we can say truly, effectually, practically, that Jesus is the Lord, we may be as sure it is by the Holy Ghost, and by a faith of God's gift, as that we did not make ourselves. And now I may say, Blessed art thou, whoever thou art, to whom Christ, the Son of the living God, is thus revealed!

Ver. 18. *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter,* — Worthy of the name I have given thee, a foundation-stone of the spiritual edifice of the church. So were all the apostles, Eph. ii. 20.

— *And upon this rock I will build my church.* — He might have more faith, more zeal, and more notice taken of him by Christ, than the other apostles; but the conclusion, that he had more power, will by no means hold; and much less that the Bishops of Rome, if ever Peter was Bishop there, succeed to it. It may also be observed, that Christ himself is the chief corner-stone of his church; and, therefore, it is not improbable that, in speaking the words, he pointed to himself.

— *And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* — Gates, for strength; as in fortified towns: or, for consultations; where they were usually held. And the meaning is, that the church, built upon this rock, should be perpetual, and triumphant over death and hell, and over the power and policy of all its enemies. So shall we, every one of us, in the virtue of a true faith.

Ver. 19. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven* — To open it to the world. And, in fact, he preached the first Christian sermon after the descent of the Holy Ghost, and was the first opener of the kingdom of heaven, or God's kingdom of grace under Christ, both to Jew and Gentile, Acts ii. and x. The kingdom of

heaven is opened to *you*, here in the book, brought and offered to you, and often sounded in your ears. But speak for yourselves; is it opened in and upon your hearts? Have you any clear sight and knowledge of its blessings and privileges, how great they are in themselves, and how much wanted by you? I mean, the blessings of God's kingdom of grace, in order to his kingdom of glory. I must speak a word more; Are you in it; owning your baptism, making Christ your hope, and, through him, living unto God?

—*And whatsoever thou shalt bind*, &c.—It is not an exclusive commission to Peter; for the apostles would understand it as equally given to them all; and Christ himself afterwards taught them so to understand it, John xx. 23. The words are expressive of the apostolical office of teaching and governing Christ's church, speaking and acting in his stead, declaring the whole doctrine of salvation by him, and binding it upon men for the life of their souls. They are, therefore, the messengers of God to us, and the infallible interpreters of his will; and, if it was our own desire, and great concern, to know what we must do to be saved, our hearts would burn within us, to think that God is always speaking to us by them, and what a treasure we have in their writings.

Ver. 20. *Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*—He charged his *disciples; all* of them consenting with Peter in his confession, and equally joined with him in the grant of *binding* and *loosing*. And why did he charge them to tell no man that he was the Christ? As yet they were not fit for it, and would have published it with mistakes; neither were they in possession of the grand proof of it, *his resurrection*. Lord, it is an important work to preach thee, and tell men that thou art the Christ. Let what thou here sayest, strike an awe into all, who would

intrude presumptuously into the office; and do thou bless and increase the number of those, who are prepared for it by the knowledge and love of thee, and a holy zeal for thy truth.

Ver. 21. *From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must suffer,* &c.—Here the Gospel of St. Matthew divides itself, as it were, into two parts, and the disciples are now to enter upon a new period of instruction. When they were grounded in the belief that he was the *Christ,* they were next to hear of his *suffering.* It is observable that he initiated them into the truth by degrees, and as he knew they were able to bear it. If he had told them at first of his death, it is probable they would have left him. Peter, notwithstanding his glorious confession, took fire at the mention of it.

Ver. 22. *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.*—My dear friends, observe that Peter said this from the darkness of a worldly spirit, and what it is that blinds and bewitches us. After he had acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, he had nothing to do but to believe, and submit to his teaching in every thing; and yet, when he heard of his suffering and dying, he stoutly contradicted, he boldly rebuked him. Nature was strong in him; and so it will infallibly show itself in *us,* and oppose Christ, in some instance or other, till it is changed by grace. Let it also be observed, that what was such a stumbling-block to Peter, is happily none to us. We know and believe that Christ suffered, the necessity of his suffering, and what cause we have to bless God that he suffered, and died for our sins. Once more; whatever we are now, why may not we be changed by divine grace into other men, as Peter was?

Ver. 23. *But he turned, and said unto Peter.*—Even so, Lord; turn to us, and turn us by thy word and Spirit,

whenever we are so unhappy as to contradict and oppose thee.

— *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me.* — Oh! it was a home, severe rebuke, and should strike deep into our own souls. Would you never hear these words from him, never be reputed his deadly adversaries, never hear him saying, "Thou art an offence unto me?" Then understand when you are so. It follows.

— *For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* — Therefore take heed how thou shapest a Christ according to thy own will and fancy. And remember that thou dost so, when "thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men;" setting up thy own dark reason, worldly sense, and vicious inclinations, against his will and commands. What then is the bent, great prevailing relish, and ruling desire of thy soul?

Ver. 24. *If any man will come after me* — Be my disciple.

— *Let him deny himself.* — His carnal reason, by an absolute submission to the word; his will, and affections, profit, ease, and pleasure, in every thing that is contrary to it, that would keep his heart from God, hinder him in his Christian progress, or unfit him for the daily exercises of piety; and be ready to part with estate and life itself, upon a call of Providence. Thus far all are agreed: and whoever knows himself to be sincere in the practice of self-denial, according to the particulars here mentioned, let him take what comfort he can find in the lawful use of the creatures, and be thankful for them.

— *And take up his cross, and follow me* — My example and instructions. Think what you will, do what else you will, nature must either be crossed by Christ, or cursed by itself.

Ver. 25. *For whosoever shall save his life* — Please him-

self, though it be to the saving of life, in opposition to Christ.

—*Shall lose it.*—If not literally, yet spiritually.

—*And whosoever will lose his life for my sake*—For me, and in obedience to my commands. There the stress is to be laid. Whatever we lose upon any other account is nothing to Christ.

—*Shall find it.*—The happiness of it here, in his faith, obedient disposition, and self-denial for Christ; hereafter, with Christ in his glory.

Ver. 26. *For what is a man profited,* &c.—This is so evident, that you cannot have the least doubt of it. Nay, but let it go deep, and be wrought into your very hearts; and do not lose your best comforts in this world, and throw away your souls eternally, for such trifles as men generally do.

Ver. 27. *For the Son of man shall come,* &c.—It appears from hence, that the life to be lost, or found, ver. 25, 26, is chiefly that of the soul, or its eternal happiness; and what is here said wants nothing but application. Lord, help us in it; and grant that, doing all our works in faith, as unto thee, we may be received to mercy, and rewarded according to them in that day.

Ver. 28. *Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*—As he will appear in his kingdom, and his redeemed with him in their glorified bodies; meaning, I suppose, the visible exhibition of that glory in his transfiguration; the account of which immediately follows these words in all the three Evangelists who have recorded it, and which St. Peter calls his Majesty, 2 Pet. i. 16.

LECTURE.

We go on happily with our reading, when the history and miracles of our Lord bring us to this confession and belief, that he is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." "For these things were written," saith St. John, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing we might have life through his name." It is, therefore, necessary in the first place that you should know and consider what you want from him, and for what end you believe in him. Need I tell you what it is? You have just now heard, it is for life, it is for the recovery of our souls, redemption from sin and death by the forgiveness of our sins, a new will to live to God in obedience, to seek the things which are above, and to value our interest in Christ as the dearest treasure of our hearts. If you have a true knowledge of your condition, with an earnest desire of his help, you may be sure that the Spirit has begun his work in you, and, according to his office in the world, will show you the glory of Christ, as the anointed of God, the Son of God, and the Head to which we must be joined for life: and you may be as sure of obtaining the life he has, and is appointed to give, to your present comfort and everlasting salvation. It cannot be repeated too often, that every word he spake, and every miracle he wrought, is a pledge and assurance of his power and will to help you according to the exigency of your case; and that every one who lays hold on him in faith for peace with God, will be a partaker of all he did and suffered for the life of mankind, according to the declared end and design of his coming into the world. And, if you thus read the Gospels, with the simplicity of little children, and with the sole design of being made wise unto salvation, all the

difficulties which now seem so great to you will vanish at once. If the heart receives what is written, it is a sufficient explanation of it, and no other will do you any good. In this disposition, you will find your own case, more or less, in every thing you read, cry after Jesus for your own healing, and turn all Scripture into a prayer. To bring you to this self-application, and trust in Jesus, under a sense of your lost condition, knowing that he will relieve you, and that none else can, is the great end, as you have heard, for which the Scripture was written; and what I have chiefly in view, in reading and opening it to you. The Lord open it to your hearts, and speak all there, where I cannot; for flesh and blood never revealed Christ to any man; I mean, as a Saviour, giving rest to the conscience, and purifying the heart unto obedience and love of the truth. This is the work of God in every man; and when we can say truly and effectually that Jesus is the Lord, we may be as sure it is by the Holy Ghost, and by a faith of God's giving, as that we did not make ourselves.

Suppose now that Christ was present at this time and place, to ask you as he did the disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" What would you say to him? Have *you* the answer ready, and could you say, as Peter did, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, through whom we have forgiveness of sins, peace of mind and conscience, and the hope of everlasting life? Blessed is that soul to whom Christ, the Son of the living God, is thus revealed. And, if he is not thus revealed to every one of us, he is no Saviour to us. If we have no clear sight and knowledge of his blessings, how great they are in themselves, and how much wanted by us, and so of course no desire of them, or faith in him for them, we have no benefit by him; he is no Christ to those who do not make him their hope, and the great wish of their souls,

and through him live unto God. When we do so, this passage of Scripture informs us, viz. when we savour the things that be of God, and the strong bent, the prevailing relish and desire of the soul, is for the salvation of Christ, and the blessings of eternity. Then we can submit to his teaching, and think it our duty and happiness to be governed by him, resolving with ourselves not to lose our portion in him, whatever self-denial it puts us to. The man who confesseth and believeth in him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, makes him his trust for pardon and life, and sees no hope in any thing else, will commit his life to him in that hope, and be prepared for any cross he thinks fit to lay upon him in his way to glory; always remembering those words which are deeply engraved in the hearts of believers — "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Let us, therefore, pray that we may *so* believe in and learn Christ, and account it our duty and great business in the world, as Christians, to be prepared for that time, when the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, to reward every man according to his works.

PRAYER.

Lord, we beseech thee, reveal thy Son to us as the way, the truth, and the life; that believing the forgiveness of our sins through him, and rejoicing in thy peace, we may yield ourselves unto thee as alive from the dead, and walk worthy of the mercy thou hast showed us. Ground us on the rock Christ Jesus, and build us up on our most holy faith unto obedience and love of the truth. Send thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, to excite us to prayer, and to groan within us for the blessings of thy covenant, to keep us in thy love, and in patient

waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Purge us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; deliver us from all worldly and vain desires; remove all the hinderances to thy coming and gracious presence in our souls, and enable us, by the mighty power of thy grace, to follow the Captain of our salvation through all difficulties and temptations; that, living unto him that died for us, we may be owned by him as his faithful servants, and find mercy at the great day, for his sake, thy Son Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXXVI.

St. Matthew, xvii. 1.

And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John—Why not all the disciples? They would relate what they had seen to the rest, for the confirmation of their faith; as we now hear it for the same end.

Ver. 2. *And was transfigured before them.*—It was to give them a sensible demonstration of his being the Christ. St. Peter knew what use to make of it; and alleges it as an infallible proof of his *power and coming*, 2 Pet. i. 16.

was a convincing argument of his power, or divine nature, breaking through the outward covering of his flesh. And as he appeared then, so he will again at his coming, and work the same change in *us;* as another apostle affirms, Phil. iii. 21. But what, my friends! Is it so indeed? Will he then "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body?" Yes; if we are first changed into the divine image, by the renewing of our minds. Lord, how complete is thy re-

demption! How great is thy power, in the transformation of soul and body into thy likeness! Accomplish thy work; raise up thy own life in us, and prepare us for thy glory, as we know assuredly thou wilt, if we put ourselves into thy hands for it.

Ver. 3. *And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.* — In the hearing of the three disciples, concerning a point in which they were but newly instructed, and as yet slow of belief, viz. his sufferings and death, Luke ix. 31. It was an extraordinary method which God took with them, to prepare them for this event. And I doubt not but all Christians have means afforded them suited to their case, and sufficient for their establishment; though we too often fail in our trials, as they did.

Ver. 4. *Then answered Peter and said unto Jesús, Lord, it is good for us to be here,* &c. — As if he was at the height of his wishes, and already in possession of heaven. Another evangelist says plainly, "he knew not what he said." Christ had not yet finished the chief business for which he came into the world; and, if his ministry had ended here, we should all have perished. He had also a great work for Peter to do, and much higher glory in reserve for him, at the end of it. Let us not take up our rest in any thing short of heaven; and let us, in the meantime, be contented to be doing Christ's work.

Ver. 5. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*—As bringing many sons unto glory; and with all others, as being in him, and partaking of his Spirit.

— *Hear him.* — Now Moses and Elias must give place, and he only be heard. Only let it be remembered that he *must* be heard. And what has he not done to engage our attention, secure our love, and sweeten our obedience? O my soul, hear *him!*

Ver. 6. *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid* — To hear the voice of

lod; supposing that none could hear it, and live. It was n awful scene; and Christ's lucid body, the bright cloud vershadowing them, and the voice coming from it, might vell strike terror into them.

Ver. 7. *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.*—Art thou cast down to the round at hearing the terrible voice of God speaking o thee in his commandments, and denouncing death for he breach of them? Here is the touch that must revive hee; here is the voice of comfort, that bids thee "arise, nd not be afraid." And now thou canst, thou wilt hear im; and be constrained by his love to live to him, who ied to deliver thee from all thy fears.

Ver. 8. *And when they had lift up their eyes, they saw o man, save Jesus only.*—So faith is the opening of our yes, and the fixing of them on Jesus, and him only, for alvation.

Ver. 9. *Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*—Though both Jesus preached and taught many things, nd the disciples, by commission from him, before that me, and as preparatory to his dying and rising again, et Christ himself, as dying for our sins, and rising again or the assurance of our faith, and discharge from death, either was, nor could be preached to the world, till after is resurrection. It is evident, therefore, that the grand pening, and full manifestation of his Gospel of grace, as reserved for his apostles; and that the nature and esign of it, or the precise manner of our salvation by im, must be learned chiefly from *them*. It is almost eedless to observe, that hearing *them*, is hearing *him*, as hey spake in his name, and received all from him.

Ver. 10. *And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then ay the Scribes that Elias must first come?*—They had just ad a fresh, incontestable evidence, in his transfiguration,

and the voice from the cloud, that he was the Christ; but still there was a doubt remaining; the Scribes said, and the Jews universally believed, that Elias must first come; and yet he had not appeared. He answers, that the prophecy of Malachi, iv. 5. was truly fulfilled in John Baptist, and, that, as to power and spirit, he was the Elijah there spoken of.

Ver. 11. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things.*—As Christ's forerunner, preparing the way for *him*, the great Restorer. This was John's office, and all he could do; to call men to repentance, to point out "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and put them into his hands. This is the office of the ministers of the Gospel at all times; and all they can do, is to declare the necessity of repentance, and to preach Christ, and faith in him, for healing and restoration. To him then let us go, every one of us for ourselves, in a deep sense of our want of him, and with an earnest will to be restored by him to the favour of God, and to experience his baptism of the Holy Ghost. Why do you now hear this, but that you may come to him for your own restoration! And what can it signify to you, though all the world should be restored by him, if you are ignorant of the work he has to do in you? And observe the order of it; John comes first. There must be a knowledge of sin, of death for sin, and of your own sinfulness, before you can accept of Christ. But if your repentance terminates in itself, if it does not bring you to the Saviour for remission and newness of life, there is, there can be no restoration.

Ver. 12. *And they knew him not*—None know him but those who are inwardly stirred up to come to his baptism of repentance; they may know the particulars of his history, and that is all.

—*Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them.*—He

will be no more regarded than John, by those who do not know John first.

Ver. 14. *There came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying*, &c.—Behold the natural workings of distress, and what you would do, if you felt for your souls. You would come, and fall down on your knees to Jesus; you would cry, Lord, have mercy!—you would tell him of your grief, and make particular mention of your own plague, and say, Thus and thus it is with me, and be earnest with him for help, as the man was for his child. Have you no knowledge of such a work as this? Are all your prayers cold and formal; not breathed from the heart; not forced from you by your own inward sense; not prayed, but only repeated? What then has he done for you, when, in reality, you never desired any thing from him?

LECTURE.

We have been reading of our Lord's transfiguration, and I am now to show you what we learn from it, and what use we are to make of this passage of Scripture. 1. It was intended by our Lord to give the apostles a sensible demonstration of his being the Christ, and to confirm their faith in him, as we now ought to hear it for the same end. It was a convincing proof of his power, or divine nature, breaking through the outward covering of his flesh. 2. As he appeared then, so he will again at his second coming. He told the apostles, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here," viz. Peter, James, and John, "which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" that is, as he will appear when he cometh in his kingdom, and all his redeemed with him in their glorified bodies. 3. For

you must know that he will then work the same change in all who belong to him, as St. Paul expressly tells us, Phil. iii. 21. and that when the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, cometh from heaven, "he will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" that is, as he appeared at his transfiguration; "according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." And with this belief, and in these words, we commit the bodies of our deceased friends to the grave, "in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" which the same apostle tells us will be in new and spiritual bodies, in that very image of Christ which we have now been reading of, for that "flesh and blood," or such corruptible bodies as we now have, "cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

What do you now think of Peter's saying, Lord, it is good for us to be here? Indeed it was not; and at the very time he spake the words, Christ was showing him something far greater than all earthly glory, what he never could be in this world, and all his faithful servants shall be in another. Do you say any thing like this in your hearts, Lord, it is good for us to be here, give us our portion, make us happy in this world, and we are contented? I beseech you, look well at this passage of Scripture, which was written on purpose that we might know what better things he has in store for us, and what glorious creatures he will make us, if in truth we belong to him. For if we are his members, we shall be like him; we shall be raised in glory, with such bodies as he had on the mount, and is now set down in at the right hand of God; for all the righteous "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," Matt. xiii. 43. No doubt the remembrance of what the apostles then saw would encourage them greatly in their work, and amidst all

their sufferings. St. Paul tells us how he was supported and comforted with the thought of his new body, "his house eternal in the heavens," of God's making and providing, 2 Cor. v. 1.

Let this, then, be the great use we make of the discovery here made to us; let it put us upon considering what we dote most upon; whether these vile, earthly bodies of ours, which are doomed to perish and feed worms, or whether we would be glad to exchange them for such glorious, heavenly bodies as Christ's was, and we may have at his coming. Let us consider that, if we would be prepared for this happy change, and as ever we hope to come to that happy time, we must first be changed into the divine image, by the renewing of our minds. Let us say to ourselves in pain and sickness, on the warrant of what we have now been reading, as well as other parts of Scripture, that like seed sown in the earth, we shall spring up into new forms, with spiritual, immortal bodies; and this belief, this hope, if it is lively in us, will not only support us under all bodily decays, and at the hour of death, but dispose us all our lives long to give due attention to the voice which came out of the cloud — "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." This voice sounds as powerfully into the hearts of believers as if they heard it spoken to them from the cloud, and all depends upon it. If you do not receive Christ, and hear him as the Son of God, you can have no share in him. To him then let us go, in a deep sense of our want of him, and with an earnest will to be taught by him, what we must do to obtain the favour of God, and rise again to the likeness of his glorious body. Hear him speaking to you in Scripture; and do not think that you have any desire to hear him, if you are not diligent readers of Scripture to know his will. Hear him speaking to you in your hearts; as

you do when you listen to the good motions he puts into them by his Spirit; and do not think that you hear him, either in Scripture or in your hearts, if you do not sincerely desire to know his will that you may do it.

Remember also, and consider what is here said, that Elias, or John Baptist, in his power and spirit, first cometh, and restoreth all things; not as himself the Restorer, but as the opener of that dispensation in which they were to be restored, and the immediate forerunner of Christ, by whom they were to be restored, God to his rightful dominion and sovereignty in the world, and man to the knowledge, favour, and enjoyment of God. John Baptist, you know, was the preacher of repentance; and you will hardly make the right use and improvement of what you are here told concerning him, if you do not take occasion from it to observe for yourselves what the order of conversion is, and how Christ comes to the soul. There must be a knowledge of sin, and of condemnation for it, with a purpose to forsake it; but this is not restoration; that is Christ's work, and he does not come savingly to you, nor you to him, till you so believe, and glorify God for his mercy.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast borne witness to thy Son by a voice from heaven, and commanded us to hear him; give us grace humbly to receive, diligently to study, and faithfully to follow his instructions; that, being guided by him into the truth, and persevering in it to the end, we may be prepared for that blessed time, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and our vile bodies be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Bring us to him in repentance, confirm our faith in him, as dying for our sins, rising again for our

justification, and quickening us by his Spirit; and make it the desire of our hearts to be renewed by him to thy image in righteousness and true holiness. Wean our affections from things present and sensible, and enable us to fix them steadily on things future and eternal. Support and comfort us in all the trials, pains, and sorrows of this mortal life, with the lively hope of a better, and bring us through thy kingdom of grace to thy kingdom of glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XXXVII.

St. Matthew, xvii. 16.

And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.—The disciples might have cured him, if they had taken the right method; but no man upon earth can help *you.*—Go directly to Jesus: and bless God that you may.

Ver. 17. *Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?*—It was a severe rebuke for their want of faith. And is it not so to all who sit under his teaching, are slow in profiting by it, and continue faithless? See whether it does not belong to you.

—*Bring him hither to me.*—O bring thyself to him. He speaks to *thee.* Thou wouldst come to him for thy body; and why then wilt thou be the worst of all enemies to thy soul, when it is in such an evil case, and thou art sure of healing for it?

Ver. 18. *And Jesus rebuked the devil,* &c.—Lord, rebuke him in us! And grant that we may dread the evil spirit in ourselves; and so believe, as to experience thy power in casting every evil out of us.

Ver. 19. *Why could not we cast him out?*—The answer will show us, that if we are unhelped, it is because we neglect the means, and trust in our own strength.

Ver. 20. *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief*—It is the same unbelief in us, which obstructs the miracle of our own cure.

—*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed*,—Ever so little true faith; or a living, growing faith, with the power of a seed in it.

—*Ye shall say unto this mountain, remove, &c.*—To the sin which is as much rooted in us as a mountain is in the earth, and as hard to be removed by our own power.

Ver. 21. *Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting*—As vigorous exercises of faith, proofs of a steady reliance on God, and powerful means to engage his aid. And will not the same faith, and the same lively actings of it, conquer sin, as well as cast out devils?

Ver. 23. *And they were exceeding sorry.*—From their worldliness, and ignorance of the necessity and benefits of that precious death. It is worth our while to observe all along, how dull, earthly, and slow of belief, the disciples were; that considering how great a change was afterwards wrought in them, and by what means it was effected, we may have hope of our own, and fly to the same power of the Holy Ghost, to have our minds enlightened, our faith increased, and our hearts renewed.

Ver. 24. *Doth not your master pay tribute?*—Which all above twenty years old, were obliged to pay for the use of the temple, that is, to God: and therefore, Christ, as his Son, was free.

Ver. 25. *Jesus prevented him.*—Doubtless, to his great astonishment. Mark it well, and take heed what you think, for all hearts are naked before him.

Ver. 27. *Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them.*—He knew his right, and how to make it good: but recedes from it, not without the expense of a miracle, to avoid giving offence. The same peaceable, meek disposition, and desire to promote the spiritual good of others, will teach us, in all like cases, what to do.

LECTURE.

Brethren, what a happiness it is that we have one to go to in all straits and difficulties, in all the diseases of our souls, who wants neither the will nor the power to help us! Let the case be ever so bad, or of ever so long continuance, we have an infallible Physician, appointed us of God, in Jesus; and, if we can but bring our faith, and the desire of our hearts up to what we read, may depend upon a cure. He did not leave his compassionate heart behind him when he left the world; he has not less power now that he is in heaven than he had upon earth; and it is our own fault if we do not bear witness to the truth of that saying, that "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," the Saviour in every thing, to every soul that trusts in him. See, then, what we have to do, in what manner we should read the Scripture, and how we get life from it. Its office is to send us to Jesus, and to him we must go, and tell him of our trouble. Say to him, O man, or woman, I am a poor, weak creature; I find myself ruined by sin, and that I have no strength against it; Lord, have mercy on me, and answer for me. It is in vain for me to look for help any where else. I read of thy casting out devils, and healing all manner of diseases; but what is this to me, if I may not have healing from thee in my own case? Why,

beloved, you may; say this to him, trust in his name, word, and promise, put yourselves into his hands, leave all to him, and never doubt but that, with such a faith, he will be your Jesus, to save you from your sins, and set you at the right-hand of God. Apply what you read and hear of Christ in this manner to yourselves; take notice that it was written on purpose to engage your belief and affiance in him, and you will bless God for every miracle of his, as much as if it had been wrought upon yourselves, and take it for an assurance put into your hands, that he will not do less for you than he did for any whom you read of. The point is, to go directly to him. The disciples could cast out devils, and heal diseases, by faith in his name, and by power derived from him, but we have them not to go to; and besides, our disease is beyond all the power and skill of man. It is sin; and we want both forgiveness of it, and strength against it. Who then can help us but he who died for it, and could not otherwise redeem us from the curse of it? And why do we not apply to him for the help we want, but because we are insensible of the extreme danger of our condition, and hear the account of his mighty works as a history of something long since done and past, which no way concerns us?

Observe what is here said: "There came to him a man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water; and I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." He was in trouble; and when all other means failed, went for relief where it was to be had. Behold, therefore, the natural working of distress, and what you would do if you felt for your souls. You would fall down on your knees to Jesus; you would cry, Lord,

have mercy; you would tell him of your grief, and make particular mention of it, and say to him, thus and thus it is with me, and be earnest with him for help, as the man was for his child. Have you no knowledge of such a work as this? Are all your prayers cold and formal, not breathed from the heart, not forced from your own inward sense, not prayed, but only repeated? What, then, has Christ done for you, when, in reality, you never desired any thing of him? And what can it signify to you, to hear of this, or any other cure which he wrought, if you never come to him with your own wants? I say therefore, again and again, that we never read the Scripture to the end for which it was written, and are in no way of getting life from it, till we are convinced by what it testifies of Jesus, that he has all power given to him in heaven and in earth, and is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him; and in this belief come to him for ourselves, knowing that we want deliverance from the plague of sin, and that, as he only can, so he will save us.

You may think it a great matter to read one or more chapters of the Bible now and then, perhaps every day; and it is well done, if you sincerely desire to profit by what you read. But, as the great design of it is to reveal Christ to us as the Saviour of sinners, and bring us to him for the life which he only can give; so the chief point, I told you, is to go directly to him, and put ourselves into his hands for the blessings he has to bestow upon us, by appointment from God, as we would go to a physician for the cure of a bodily distemper. This is faith, and faith saves us; because it is putting the work upon Christ, which he can do, and we cannot; with great rejoicing in the conscience, and many thanksgivings to God for providing such a remedy for us, and sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we

might live through him. Let it, therefore, be our constant, daily prayer, that we may so believe in him, as to commit our souls to him, trusting in him for pardon and acceptance with God, and faithfully following his instructions.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who didst send thy blessed Son to take away our sins, and heal all the diseases of our souls; and hast exalted him to thy right-hand, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins; we beseech thee, bring us to him in faith, with earnest desire of all his benefits. As none come to the knowledge of thee here, or to thy glory hereafter, but by him; so all that come unto thee by him, he is able to save to the uttermost. Grant that we may commit our souls to him in the belief and love of his salvation, and be kept by the remembrance of what he hath done and suffered for us both from presumption and despair; that we may neither speak peace to ourselves without an interest in his precious blood-shedding, nor doubt of its efficacy to cleanse us from the guilt of all our sins, and wash out the foulest stains of the greatest sinners. Lord, reveal him to our hearts, as the way, the truth, and the life, make us thankful for the great mercy of our deliverance by him, keep us faithful to him in all well-doing, and accept us for his sake, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXXVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, xviii. 1.

At the same time,—Just after he had told them of his sufferings and death. And I suppose this is mentioned to show how little effect it had upon them.

— *Came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* — In his kingdom of worldly power, which they imagined he was come to set up, according to the common expectation of the Jews. And when they asked, "Who is the greatest, &c."? they expected he would tell them, and did not doubt but it would be themselves. The disciples were yet carnal and earthly-minded; betray it upon all occasions; and prove to us, that whilst we are so, we must think and act accordingly, mistake Scripture, and be slow of belief. In his answer, he corrects their mistake about the nature of his kingdom, not directly, but by instructing them, and in them all others, how they must be qualified to enter into *his* kingdom of heaven. Therefore, ask not who is the greatest in it, but learn from this whole passage how you must belong to it, and what you will be when you are in it; always remembering, that your admission into it is of mere grace and favour, and the lowest place in it far beyond your deserts.

Ver. 2. *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.* — Observe his manner of teaching, and how sweetly and forcibly he gives a check to their vain thoughts. Fancy yourselves present at the very action, and never forget the little child.

Ver. 3. *And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—Thou art a wise man, knowest many things, and art full in the pride of reason and self-ability. Beware that this does not keep thee from Christ, and shut thee out of the kingdom of heaven. The declaration is peremptory. Hear how it runs: *Be converted*; turn back to thy childhood, and be the same with Christ *now*, that thou wast *then*, in thyself, and with those who had the care of thee, or else there is no hope of thy salvation.

Ver. 4. *Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child,* — To be as free from aspiring thoughts, as helpless in himself, and as ready to receive the doctrines of the kingdom, as a little child.

— *The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* — Because he has renounced himself and his own miserable pretensions, no longer stands before God in the confidence of a lie, and gives himself up into the hands of him who alone can make him great, and who makes all great in proportion to the sense they have of their own littleness.

Ver. 5. *And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name,* — One so qualified, so self-emptied, so humble, so child-like, to help and encourage him in the ways of Christ; in love to him, and for Christ's sake.

— *Receiveth me.* — Christ, in affection; Christ, in them; Christ, with all his benefits.

Ver. 6. *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,* — Turn him from Christ, or hinder him in his progress, by example, persuasion, or ill usage.

— *It were better for him that a mill-stone,* &c. — Great is the sin, and sad will be the doom, of all those who oppose Christ, or his work, in any of his servants.

Ver. 7. *Wo unto the world because of offences* — That is, as you have already heard, hinderances, or stumbling-blocks, thrown in the way of others to turn them from the truth. And he says, wo unto the world upon this account, as if it was the general, and most common sin of the world at all times.

— *For it must needs be that offences come.* — Considering the nature of men, prone to evil, and whatever pretences they make to goodness, real haters of godliness, so it will be. But the necessity is of their own making, and what all such must severely answer for.

— *But wo to that man by whom the offence cometh.* —

Observe carefully how the wo is repeated, and what sharpness of expression he useth in the matter; that none of you may ever share in the guilt of hindering, or keeping back, husband or wife, child, servant, or neighbour, when they are in earnest in turning to Christ. But if they are turned aside, by force, or threats, displeasure of friends, loss of means, or suffering of any kind, will this excuse them? No; it is at their peril; duty must not be given up, conscience must not be stifled, Christ must not be deserted, for any worldly consideration. And, therefore, the advice in the two next verses is for *them;* to bethink themselves what they will gain by keeping all, and losing their souls.

Ver. 8, 9. *Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off: If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, &c.*—It may be a hard trial thou art put to, like the cutting off a limb, or plucking out an eye; but put hell in the balance against it.

Ver. 10. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.* — Christ, you see, pleads hard for them, and dwells upon the subject; knowing that men are too apt to despise them for the very thing which recommends them to the notice of God, their teachableness, simplicity, and littleness in their own eyes. He says, *despise;* and his words are always well chosen. Others, however, sunk in vice and folly, are pitied, or lightly censured; but God Almighty's little ones are heartily and emphatically *despised.*

—*For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven*—Stand before him, to receive his commands concerning them, and represent any injuries done to them. What an honour for these little ones, and how great amends for man's contempt of them! How great a proof of God's

care of them, and how strong an argument against contempt of them!

Ver. 11. *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost* — Even these little ones, lost till he found them. Mark the reason here given for not despising them; in so doing you are the avowed enemies of Christ, and endeavour, as much as in you lies, to frustrate his beloved design of saving them. Hear how affectingly he speaks of it, and what a heart of love is opened to you in what follows.

Ver. 12. *How think ye?* — If you do not yet know, learn from hence, what you are to think of God's pity and concern for sinners, and how plainly and sensibly it is here set before us.

— *If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray.* — Are you yet strayed from him? He is now seeking after you, this hour, in the call of this very word. What a mercy it is, that what was spoken by Christ, above seventeen hundred years ago, should now be sounding in your ears! And it is your own fault, if it does not sound into your hearts.

— *Doth he not leave the ninety and nine,* &c. — So Christ left his glory in his Father's bosom; so he came into the world to recover his wandering lost sheep, and carry them back with him into his own heaven.

Ver. 13. *And if so be that he find it.* — If so be! Oh! when will it once be! Why art thou still a lost man, in spite of all this kindness?

— *Verily, I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.* — Not that God has less love for those who are returned to him, and safe under the Shepherd's care; but just as you, for the present, would have a more sensible joy for the return of a child from evil courses, or recovery from a

desperate sickness, than for the rest of your family. It is a marvellous discovery of God's love and our danger.

Ver. 14. *Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*—The owner's going after his lost sheep into the mountains, and joy of finding it, is intended to represent God's concern for *all* his flock, and the method he takes to recover them when they are gone astray.

LECTURE.

FROM this portion of Scripture we learn what sort of persons they are for whom Christ expresses such a tender regard; they are those whom he calls little ones, such as are little in their own eyes, have most of the innocence of little children, and, like them, receive what they are taught with undisputing simplicity. "Take heed," he says, "that ye offend not one of these little ones;" lay no hinderances in the way of their salvation; take heed, as you love your own souls, not to say or do any thing that may stop their progress in it, or turn them out of it. None will who are in that way themselves. They would think it the greatest injury that could be done them, to be turned aside from Christ; and, therefore, will not do it to others; but wish well to all who are in pursuit of the same end, and help them to the uttermost of their power. Nevertheless, "it must needs be," he tells us, "that offences "come;" that is, considering what great numbers there are always in the world who are unconcerned about their own souls, and look with an evil eye upon those who are in earnest in religion, it cannot well be otherwise. "But wo," says he, "to that man by whom the offence cometh: it "were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about

" his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the " sea." Would you *not* be the man or woman against whom this wo is denounced? Consider what you have to do; you must either be one of Christ's little ones yourself, or else you will be an enemy to those who are, and desire to be known as his true disciples. For there is always deadly opposition between the seed of the serpent and the children of God. That you might choose the one and avoid the other, and know what will make you fit to enter into the kingdom of heaven, that is, into Christ's kingdom of grace here, as the way to his kingdom of glory hereafter, this portion of Scripture was written, and has now been read. You must be converted, and become as little children. Think you see Christ in the very act of calling a little child to him, setting him in the midst of the disciples, and saying to them, " Verily I say unto " you, except ye be converted, and become as little " children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and this will show you what true greatness is, and how you must attain it. If you would be great in his account, that is, truly so, you must be little in your own eyes; you must have no will or wisdom of your own, but give yourselves up entirely to be taught and guided by him, as little children, who have every thing to learn, and are incapable of choosing for themselves, do to their parents and masters.

You may think his doctrine bears too hard upon flesh and blood; and corrupt nature, in many instances, will be rising up against it; but he who knows, that if we were left to ourselves we should rush blindfold into the way of destruction, and has too great a love for us to suffer us to be our own guides and instructors, has warned us beforehand that we must, of all necessity, submit to his teaching, and break through all difficulties to follow it. He says, cut off a hand or a foot, or pluck out an eye, rather than keep

them to the endangering of thy soul; be not guided by them any more than if thou hadst them not; let them not carry thee to hell; however contrary it may be to thy inclinations, whatever it costs thee, whatever pain it puts thee to, at no rate forsake Christ to follow thy own will. If we find that any thing about us, or belonging to us, though ever so near and dear to us, would prove a hinderance to us in our way to heaven, father or mother, husband, wife, or child, an evil habit, a sin that sticks close to us, whatever it is that we know to be contrary to his will and command, he is at a word with us; and if we would be his little children, we must forego it absolutely and for ever. And when he had said this, as a caution to all not to lay any offences or stumbling-blocks in the way of their own salvation, but to remove them upon the peril of their souls, he returns to what he had said before, and repeats his charge to us, not to hinder any who are in that good way, those whom he calls his little ones, and prizes as his dear children; knowing how apt mankind would be, from their natural averseness to him and his doctrine, to bear a grudge against all that belong to him. See, says he, that ye do it not; "for I say unto you, that "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of "my Father which is in heaven;" meaning, that however they may be despised and ill-treated by the world, they are under the special care and protection of God, and have their angels appointed to minister unto them. And farther he tells us, that as he came to save them, and followed them into the wilderness where they were lost; so, when they are found of him, he rejoices over them, as men do upon finding any thing they have lost, after a diligent search for it. My brethren, we are all by nature the lost sheep; and our heavenly Father, who is not willing that we should perish, now sends this word of Scripture after us, and Christ with it, to seek, and bring us home to him-

self. Let it not call to you in vain. The good Lord speak it to your hearts, and make it your daily prayer to find Christ, and be found of him, to your present comfort, and everlasting salvation.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast taught us by thy Son Jesus Christ, that except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; give us grace meekly to receive, and faithfully to follow his instructions. Take from us all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word, and bring us home to thy flock. Let thy light and thy truth, which thou hast sent down from above, guide our feet into the way of peace. Enable us to discover and remove all the hinderances to our salvation, and to encourage and help one another in the great work thou hast given us to do. Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Oh! let us not say we will not have thy blessed Son to reign over us; but bring us to him in repentance and faith, that rejoicing in thy peace, we may serve thee without fear, in the holiness and righteousness of thy children, and be accepted to thy mercy in Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XXXIX.

St. Matthew, xviii. 15.

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee — By laying a stumbling-block in the way of thy salvation; take heed that it be none to thee; or, in case of any other injury, do to him as God does to thee, and to all; be patient; still endeavour to preserve him as a brother;

keeping his interest only in view, instead of giving way to resentment; and remembering how dear his preservation, if it be possible, is to God. In what method we are to proceed, is next told us. But, alas! how rarely is it followed; and what conviction is here of the different state we are in!

—*Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*—Let not a soul upon earth know it, till thou hast faithfully and charitably told him of it.

—*If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*—Great gain indeed! and great argument this to a Christian for all manner of condescension, forbearance, and prudent endeavours to reclaim him.

Ver. 16. *But if he will not hear thee,*—He may have returned railing and ill usage for thy brotherly kindness; but still thou must not stop here; try another method; call in help; take with thee one or two more; perhaps, their joint endeavours, and appearing against him as witnesses, may bring him to a sense of his fault.

Ver. 17. *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.*—To thy minister, and to the congregation of which thou art a member, for his reproof, and public censure.

—*But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*—Thou hast done all that is required of thee, and wilt be justified in leaving him to his sentence; which, as it follows in the next verse, will be ratified in heaven.

Ver. 19. *Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree, &c.*—In prayer for the forgiveness of such an one upon his repentance, or in any other matter agreeable to the will of God.

Ver. 20. *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*—There is the grand qualification; *in Christ's name,* according to Christ

and for his spiritual blessings. Then he joins with us. O Jesus! be with us, and in the midst of us, at this time and place; and let us never do any thing to deprive ourselves of thy gracious presence, whether alone, or assembled together.

Ver. 21. *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft,* &c.—When Peter wrote his Epistles, he would not have asked this question. See 1 Pet. iv. 8.

Ver. 22. *Until seventy times seven*—That is, without end; as we should do, if we truly forgave once. A heart sensible of its own condition in the sight of God, and pitying others on that ground, is never weary of forgiving.

Ver. 23. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened,* &c.—Though it is a kingdom of grace and mercy, we have an account to give of what we have been and done in it, and what effect that grace has had upon us.

Ver. 24. *Which owed him ten thousand talents.*—A vast sum. Thou art the man.

Ver. 25. *But forasmuch as he had not to pay.*—Every one of us is in that situation. We have not to pay; and God might justly proceed to this extremity with us all.

Ver. 26. *The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him.*—Hast thou done this? Didst thou ever fall down before God, so much as once in thy life, under a deep sense of what thou owest him, and thy miserable poverty, and cry for mercy?

—*Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*—Not so. Say this at thy peril. The servant is represented as saying it, to show his submission; and this must also be found in thee; but if thou thinkest of making full payment, or any payment, to God and his justice, for thy sins, thy case is desperate. That is all the work of another hand.

Ver. 27. *Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*—As sure as you hear this, there is forgiveness for the greatest of sins, and for all sinners, for Christ's sake, upon their humble intreaty. And this is properly the glad tidings of the Gospel, and our only relief.

Ver. 32. *O thou wicked servant.*—How dreadful will this be from the mouth of our compassionate Lord, and how piercing the conviction—"O thou wicked servant!"

Ver. 34. *And his Lord was wroth*, &c.—It was not said before that he was wroth on account of the great debt, though he might justly have been so; but now there was no room for remission or favour; the ungrateful wretch must be given up to his desert. And, doubtless, you think he deserved the worst that could be done to him, and must be condemned by his own conscience. So will all one day, who are given up to punishment; they will be self-condemned, and see the reason of it in as strong a light as you now see it here.

Ver. 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do*, &c.—In the sense of thy love, O Jesus, we can receive this saying. Convince us of our sin, in the want of this temper, that we may come to thee for remission, and for the desire and power to forgive from the heart.

LECTURE.

In the former part of this portion of Scripture, which has now been read, our Lord gives directions, concerning the temper of mind we must be in, and the conduct to be observed towards an offending brother; which is, to proceed against him with all possible tenderness, so to reprove the fault as to profit the man, and not to divulge it but with a sole view to his amendment.

And, to strike the greater terror into the offending party, if he shall obstinately persist in denying or refusing to make reparation for the injury he has done, (notwithstanding the evidence of his guilt before witnesses, and the more solemn admonition of the church, or congregation of which he is a member,) to acknowledge and repent of his fault, he is assured, that so long as he continues in this disposition, there is no hope of forgiveness, and that the judgment passed upon him on earth will be ratified in heaven. You must needs perceive what an excellent means the method enjoined by our Saviour would be, of preventing injuries, reclaiming offenders, increasing brotherly love, and preserving peace and unity among Christians. Alas! we can only lament that it is not put in practice; and I wish we did at least so truly lament it, as to be always ready in the bent of our minds to observe the rule here laid down, of using all prudent endeavours to reform one another, and whatever may be the success of them, never to harbour any resentment against the person who has injured us. This disposition is the very temper and essence of happiness: and it is well for us that Peter asked the question, How oft shall I forgive? since otherwise, it is to be feared, we should have confined our forgiveness within very narrow bounds, and thought his seven times more than enough. In the divine answer of the parable methinks I see the whole nature, force, and tendency of Christ's religion; what it is in itself, and how it operates in us; Gospel grace and Gospel holiness arising out of it, and especially the obligation to universal, unbounded forgiveness of others, from a sense of God's love to us in the free forgiveness of our innumerable trespasses against him. "Ye know," says St. Paul, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though "he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye, "through his poverty, might be made rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9.

And then he enforces the consideration of Christ's love, or great abasement of himself for their sakes, and to rescue them from the lowest depth of misery, as a very prevailing argument for their abounding in all acts of charity and liberality to their poor brethren. And as the divine mercy and compassion to us wretched, perishing sinners, is fruitful in good effects, and extends to all other instances of duty, when it is well understood, and thoroughly believed; so in the parable you have heard it is urged upon us for the duty of forgiveness, in such a manner that we cannot help feeling the force of it, and must needs judge ourselves the basest and most unworthy of all creatures, if we do not suffer it to have its full weight upon our minds. "O thou wicked servant," says God, speaking in the person of the King who would take account of his servants, "I forgave thee all that debt "because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also "have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as "I had pity on thee?" All that *debt*, my friends! What? that vast debt forgiven, all our sins blotted out of God's book, and not so much as one of them left behind to torment and sting our consciences, or rise up in judgment against us? Did you ever see your sins in the light of Scripture, and by conviction from the Spirit of God? Did you ever take an account of them in their number, guilt, and heinousness? Did the law ever take you by the throat, saying, "Pay me what thou owest?" Did you ever see your utter inability to pay all, or any the least part of it, or to make satisfaction for so much as one sin? And when you were in this distress, delivered up to Almighty Justice, did the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in paying your debt with his own blood, appear to you as a most welcome and seasonable relief? Do you believe it? Do you thankfully embrace it, as God's mercy to you in your time of need, when you could not help yourself,

when there was no other help for you in earth or heaven; and did you ever taste the sweetness of those words, "then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt?"

Dearly beloved, I beseech you to understand and consider what the instruction is I am endeavouring to raise from the passage of Scripture now before us, and which is indeed the great point I aim at in all my preaching. We are snatched as brands out of the fire by the hand of Almighty Grace; we are saved by mercy as condemned malefactors; we are redeemed from the curse of sin and eternal death, by the blood of Christ. And when we fall down before God in repentance and humility, under a deep sense of our undone state, fly to his mercy in Christ, and accept him as our Surety and the Lord our righteousness; we are received into him as members of his body, and entitled to the benefit of all he did and suffered for us. For he is our peace, our justification, our discharge from the guilt of sin, our right to heaven; and not any thing of our own, nothing that we are or do, because in our very best estate it is far short of what God requires of us, and he cannot possibly accept it at our hands as full payment. This, as I am often telling you, is properly the glad tidings of the Gospel to a sinful condemned world, enough to quiet all our fears, and make every heart leap for joy. But now what is the meaning of all this, and how will the belief of such rich grace and mercy work upon the pardoned soul? If you know what it is, have been carefully seeking after it, and receive it thankfully, as nothing less than life from the dead, will you not own the obligation it lays you under, to live unto him that died for you? Will you not be ready to say, as Paul did when he was struck to the earth with a light from heaven, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" You know what he would have you to do; you have heard this day, if

you will but remember, and lay it to heart; he says, forgive much, as you have ten thousand times more to be forgiven. Yes, Lord, says the believing, faithful soul, knowing its own want of infinite forgiveness, rejoicing in mercy, and resolving to keep it, for thy sake, I will forgive every man living, not only until seven times, but until seventy times seven, their debts, when they cannot pay, and their trespasses always.

The parable is so plain in this respect, viz. for the duty of forgiveness, that it cannot possibly be mistaken. But then you do not understand me right, nor make the full use of this passage of Scripture which I am showing you, unless you carry it on to other points of duty, and make God's mercy, and Christ's love, the ground of your obedience in all other instances. For this is the happy, Christian state, when the love of Christ in our redemption takes such full possession of our minds, that we are willing to do any thing at his bidding, and for his sake; when we gladly hear him saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" when we receive him for our Teacher and Lawgiver, as well as atonement, and are turned to God in prayer, that the mercy which saves may rule us. It must do both, if ever it is mercy to us; and, though I would be thankful to God for the full assurance of faith, and the witness of his Spirit, that my sins are forgiven, yet I could take no comfort from it, if it was not accompanied with a will and desire to please God in obedience, and be his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Lord bless what you have heard to this end; and make it the prayer of your hearts to be the true disciples of Christ in faith and love, by your thankfulness to God for him as your Redeemer, faithfulness to him as your Master, and readiness to do whatever is commanded you for his sake.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Lord, that in the faith of thy great goodness, and for Christ's sake, we may forgive and live in charity with all the world. We adore and bless thy mercy in the forgiveness of the vast debt we owed thee, and for discharging us from the penalty of our sins, by making thy own Son a curse for us. Let it be a sacred bond upon our souls to hate and forsake the sins for which he died, to offer up ourselves unto thee as thy devoted servants in all holy obedience, and to glorify thee by our lives. Send down thy Holy Spirit of grace to illuminate and quicken us, to groan within us for the blessings of thy children, to bring us in repentance and faith to the blood of sprinkling, to keep us in thy love, and in patient waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; for whose sake we desire to be heard, and in whom alone we hope to be accepted. Amen.

SECTION XL.

St. Matthew, xix. 2.

And great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there.—They knew they wanted healing, and therefore followed him. It is this sense which brings all to him. And he healed them there, that he might be trusted in for spiritual healing every where, and at all times. When we know that all want it, and that all may have it who come to him for it, we understand the Scripture and ourselves. If he were now present, and ready to heal you, as indeed he is, can you lay your hand upon your own sore? What would you say to him?

Ver. 3. *The Pharisees also came unto him, and tempting him.*—However they meant to entrap him, he was proof

against all their trials, by his perfect knowledge of what was right, and will to adhere to it. If we have the latter, upright wills, and honest hearts, and are faithful to what we may know from *him*, we shall not easily be baffled or ensnared by any opposers.

Ver. 6. *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh* — And, therefore, according to the original design of God, in the institution of marriage, as explained by him who best knew it, never to be separated, except in the one case here mentioned. Nay, more, according to the spirit and purpose of the sacred, mysterious union, to have but one heart and one will. Hear, husbands and wives!

— *What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.* — Not only in this, but all other cases, to which it may be applied. Let none put asunder Christ and salvation, faith and holiness, holiness and the Spirit.

Ver. 8. *Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you, &c.* — Let it be observed, that under Christ there is no allowance for this hardness of heart; we having such advantages for doing what is commanded, and so strict a call to it.

Ver. 10. *His disciples say unto him, If the case be so, &c.* — This kind of reasoning is common with us, and we easily find out something to object to what is enjoined us. An honest heart has but one rule, and by keeping itself to it, is freed from all perplexities; which is, that what Christ commands is best, and must be done.

Ver. 11. *But he said unto them, all men cannot receive this saying* — Of not marrying; for that few have the gift of continence. He imposes no restraint on any, leaves all to judge in their own case; but at the same time insinuates the advantage of a voluntary celibacy, for the sake of greater usefulness and spiritual improvement.

Ver. 12. *And there be eunuchs, which have made them-*

selves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake — To be more at liberty to promote the salvation of souls, and the interests of Christ's kingdom.

— *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.* — Here is no necessity laid upon the ministers of the Gospel, more than others, to receive it. And, perhaps, as many peculiar reasons may be given for their marrying, as against it.

Ver. 14. *For of such is the kingdom of heaven.* — And, therefore, one would think little children are at least as capable of being admitted into it by baptism as others; especially as there is such a precedent for it of God's own establishing, in receiving the children of the Jews into covenant with him by circumcision. But the main thing to be regarded, is the important lesson of instruction here held forth to us. He says, "of such is the "kingdom of heaven;" meaning, of such only, of men so teachable, so humble, so desirous of the sincere milk of the word, so void of guile, malice, and all aspiring thoughts. Go now, and ponder this deeply; and do not conclude at once, by the greatest of all mistakes, that you are what you know you should be; and what for certain you are not, if he has not made you so.

Ver. 15. *And he laid his hands on them* — With prayer and benediction. It is to be supposed he did both, though only one of them is mentioned.

LECTURE.

How happy should we be if we followed our Lord in his teaching, chapter after chapter; and had this proof to give of our faith in him, and desire of his blessings, that we sincerely purpose to receive all his instructions, and pray for grace to form our hearts and lives according

to the rule of his doctrine! If we had been told that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world at such a time and place, long ago, to recover mankind to God, and show them the way to heaven; that he spake as never man did, and that, wherever he went, great multitudes followed him, and were very attentive to hear him; what an unspeakable loss should we have thought it, if all his words had died with him, and nothing that he said and taught had ever come down to us; and how earnestly should we have wished to know the will of God as declared by him, and what that way of salvation was which he discovered to the world! Need I tell you, do you not know, that by the same goodness and mercy of God which sent him to seek and to save us, the doctrines he taught, the discourses he delivered, the way of salvation he preached, were committed to writing for the benefit of all succeeding ages; that we have them now before us in this blessed book; and that all the four Gospels conclude with a particular account of his death, as the sole means of our redemption and restoration to life; that in the belief of so great a mercy, and in the sense of his love, we might listen to his instructions, study his will, receive all his commands, bind his law upon our hearts, and take him for our Lord and King to reign over us: he taught a pure morality; he convinced the world of sin in coming short of it; he established it as the rule of duty to all his disciples; he demonstrated, by his miracles, that he was ordained of God to save us, and that our help is in him; but the generality of those, who saw and heard him in his life-time, and were the best disposed to profit by his doctrine, knew no more of him than that he was a prophet, or divine teacher; they did not know all the love that was in his heart; they did not know, as we do, that the great design of his coming

was to suffer death upon the cross for our sins. I would, therefore, desire you to consider what advantage we have in this knowledge and belief, for a willing and full subjection to him.

Christ says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" meaning, that no one who knows what obligations he has to him, believes in him as his Saviour, and loves him on that account, will either be ignorant of his commands, or refuse obedience to them. He reads every chapter of this Gospel in connexion with the three last, has a suffering Christ always in his eye, and whenever any command seems hard to him, puts the cross to it. Here then, I say, is your ground as Christians, and the proof of a Christian state. The consideration of Christ's love in dying for us, has a mighty force in it to engage us to his service, and bind us to God in a sacred bond of love and gratitude; but if it has not this effect upon us, if it does not constrain us to live unto him in the way of his prescribing, we are not his disciples, we are not his friends, we do not love him, whatever we pretend, we do not believe in him. You may do many things for the sake of decency and reputation, and because natural conscience has some check upon you, and will not always suffer you to do as you list; but this at best is only a natural state; and, if you would be Christians, you must have Christ's tie upon your hearts, do all your works for his sake, abstain from all evil, and abound in all good, with a view to please God, and because it is his will.

In the portion of Scripture which has now been read, Christ confirms the law of marriage given to our first parents in paradise, and declares it to be binding for life, except in the case of adultery; and, accordingly, that case excepted, no divorces are allowed in Christian countries. But husbands and wives, truly Christians,

look beyond the bare letter of the law, hear Christ saying that they are one flesh, and consider the marriage state both as a sacred union of hearts, and a perpetual lively figure of the spiritual marriage and unity that is betwixt Christ and his church. What peace would there be in families, and how much more happiness in the world than there is, if all did so, received the command from his mouth, and endeavoured in simplicity and godly sincerity to live up to it for his sake. And if we were thus faithful to him, not only in this, but all other instances of duty, teachable and single-hearted, and desiring nothing so much as to please our Saviour and Master, we should be those very little children whom He would not have forbidden to come unto him, but receives with all possible marks of good-will and affection, puts his hands upon them, puts his spirit into them, takes them into his heart, prays for them, and concerning whom he declares, that of such is the kingdom of heaven; meaning, that no others can belong to his kingdom of grace here, or be received into his kingdom of glory hereafter. That we may be of this happy number, be taken into the arms and heart of Christ, be lively members of his kingdom upon earth, and have him interceding for us in heaven, and sending down his blessings upon us from thence, let us all devoutly pray.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast taught us by thy Son Jesus Christ, that except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven: convince us of our natural blindness, and make us thankful for thy holy and heavenly instructions. Bring us to him in repentance and faith, that, rejoicing in him as our God and Saviour, we may yield ourselves unto thee as alive from the dead, and walk worthy of the

mercy thou hast showed us. Let thy peace ever rule in our hearts, and make us to walk suitably to the grace of forgiveness. Thou who didst deliver up thy own Son for us all, and wilt also with him freely give us all things; give us a lively sense of thy love, and grace to keep it; give us understandings to know thee, hearts to love thee, and wills to obey thee, and crown all thy gifts with the everlasting fruition of thy blessed self; which we humbly presume to beg of thee, in the name and for the sake of our great High Priest, Mediator, and Advocate, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XLI.

St. Matthew, xix. 16.

And behold, one came and said unto him, Good master.— It is plain he had conceived a high opinion of his wisdom and goodness, if not divine authority; and seemed desirous that Christ should put him upon some great task, thinking nothing too hard for him. Our Lord saw him through and through. And it may be proper to observe, in order to understand what follows, that he does not give him the answer he gave to some others, "thy faith saves thee," or the same St. Paul gave to the awakened jailor, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but such an one as his case required, and knowing that no other, at this time, would have suited him.

— *What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*—He spoke every natural man's thought; he was, and would be self-saved, and go to heaven with the price of it in his hands.

Ver. 17. *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me*

good? — As thou dost not know who I am, why callest thou me good? — *There is none good but one, that is God* — Not thou, whatever thou thinkest. It was a home stroke levelled at the pride of his heart; and might have darted a ray of light into him, as to man's goodness, and the conceit he had entertained of his own.

Ver. 17. *But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* — He asked, "What good thing shall I do, "that I may have eternal life?" Not questioning but that it might be had by *doing*, nor suspecting any want of goodness in himself. Well then, says Jesus, "If thou "wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Be good. Look to it, be sure that thou fail not in any one tittle of thy obedience.

Ver. 20. *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up.* — It was a wretched mistake; not one of them, when rightly understood.

— *What lack I yet?* — Nothing, if he had spoken the truth. See whether something like this is not lurking at the bottom of your hearts, to keep you from Christ.

Ver. 21. *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect* — In thy obedience; on which alone thou buildest for salvation.

— *Go and sell*, &c. — This was an absolute command, suited to the person's case and circumstances, and what Christ knew to be necessary for him; but not given to all.

Ver. 21. *And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* — Be as rich in reality, as now thou art poor.

— *And come and follow me* — By taking up the cross; and to learn of him more perfectly the way of righteousness.

Ver. 22. *But when the young man heard that saying, he*

went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.—Wonder not at this, till you are sure that nothing makes you turn your backs on Christ and his commands. You have not great possessions; but if your hearts are in the world, a small matter may be a strong chain about you.

O Jesus, we would have thee, and our own wills; and if we cannot have both, are apt to choose the latter. We are sorry to leave thee: but too many of us do leave thee. O! do thou teach us to see ourselves in this glass; and convince us effectually of the necessity, the joy, of being wholly resigned to thee.

Ver. 23. *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—Now, therefore, consider if it is really the great, prevailing desire of your hearts to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and secure to yourselves that treasure, whether the poor have any cause to repine at their lot, or murmur against God, for keeping this great, and almost insurmountable difficulty out of the way of their salvation.

Ver. 24. *And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel,* &c.—The secret wish, great business, and steady purpose of the generality of mankind, whether rich or poor, is to be this camel.

Ver. 25. *When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?*—Who, in such circumstances? Or, who of all mankind; as all would be rich and have the same hearts. Or they might mean, if those, who have so much greater advantages for knowledge, shall hardly be saved, who can? I am sure this is the very thing *you* say. Nothing is more common than to hear the poor complaining of want of time, learning, &c. and, in direct opposition to Christ, making their station in life a pretence for not working out their salvation.

Ver. 26. *But Jesus beheld them.*—Intending they should take particular notice of what he said, and carrying conviction in his look.

—*And said unto them, With men this is impossible.*—For a rich man not to trust in his riches, nor to think more highly of himself for them; to be humble and modest, meek and condescending; to sit as loose to the world as if he had nothing in it; to give his heart to God, and make the riches of grace his treasure, and supreme delight. If this is not impossible to man, what is? But do not deceive yourselves; worldliness and pride, forgetfulness of God, and stupid unconcern for the soul, can dwell in a cottage; and the heart of every man is hard to work upon, and will for ever be what it is, without the grace and power of God. There is comfort for all in the next words.

— *But with God all things are possible.*—Rich and poor, there is your remedy. Fly to God. You have heard much already in this Gospel of the power of Jesus; and it is the design of all Scripture to bring you to him, helpless in yourselves, for strength to overcome all difficulties, and to do what is impossible to nature. Till you know this, that God's work must be done, and that he only can do it, and in this sense cleave to him for help, you are in the darkness of unbelief.

Ver. 27. *Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*—Their little was their all. Nevertheless, it must be owned that the disciples were yet too worldly; and, though they had forsaken all, it was probably too much with a view to a better bargain for themselves, by their *temporal* advancement under Christ.

Ver. 28. *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me.*—The apostles, in a peculiar sense; all, in their degree. Are you come to this

point, that to be a follower of Jesus, in truth and sincerity, is a high and holy name, and the happiest of all conditions? And are you, therefore, resolved to follow him? Mark your blessedness.

Ver. 28. *In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* — The apostles will then be advanced to the supereminent dignity here spoken of. But observe, the regeneration itself, the happiness of that new state, or Christ's glorious kingdom, will be common to all who have been regenerated here.

Ver. 29. *And every man that hath forsaken houses or brethren,* &c.— At the first preaching of the Gospel, there was a peculiar reason for this self-denial, and many were called to it. The spirit of it must always be attended to. Every affection must give way to Christ, and nothing in the world be so dear to us as the honour of the Gospel and our interest in him.

— *Shall receive an hundred fold.* — Not an hundred fold of things of the same kind; the words, father, mother, wife, exclude this sense. No; that never is the Christian's wish and aim; but an hundred fold more enjoyment "in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," than he could possibly have from all earthly comforts, relations, or possessions.

— *And shall inherit everlasting life.* — The Christian's hope, a most superabundant recompense for the greatest self-denial, and the crown of all. Let it sink down into your hearts, and be the anchor of your souls.

Ver. 30. *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.* — Many, like the young man, high in their own and the world's esteem, but not coming to Christ, and not receiving all his commands, shall be last; that is, have no share in the everlasting inheritance: this

was generally the case of the Jews. Whereas, others. now visibly bad, but repenting, believing, and obeying, shall find grace, and be received into the kingdom of heaven: this was the case of the Gentiles.

Lord, as we are now first, and thy people by profession, and outward privilege; we beseech thee, keep us steadfast in thy fear and love, increase our faith, and make us little in our own eyes. And, whenever we are so unhappy as to make ourselves last, by falling from thee; have mercy on us, and grant us repentance unto life for Jesus' sake.

LECTURE.

We read the Gospels, and all Scripture, in vain, if it does not bring us to Christ with this question, "What "shall I do to inherit eternal life?" You must understand that the young man, who asked it, was full of himself, conceited of his own righteousness, and seemed to think that his obedience would stand the test, and entitle him to the reward of eternal life. All the commandments, says he, have I kept from my youth up; What lack I yet? This was a bold word; and Christ, who knew he had not, and saw through his vain pretensions, in order to convince him of the unsoundness of his state, tried him with this command — "If thou wilt be perfect," (so perfect in thy obedience that God can see no defect or flaw in it, and perfectly entitled to the reward of it,) "go, "sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou "shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." You know how he shrunk from the command, and chose to lose heaven, rather than part with his estate. Probably, you will be at a loss for the right understanding of what is here said. You will be ready to ask, Must all do so?

Is it strictly required of all to sell what they have, and give to the poor? No, not unless Christ was here present to lay such a particular injunction upon you or me; for then it would be our duty, like Abraham in offering up his only Son, to do as we are commanded, and we must not pretend to approve our obedience to God, if we fail in any one particular.

Observe, the young man asked, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? thinking he had done enough for it, and not doubting but that Christ would think so too. Christ, therefore, who saw into the depth of his heart, took him in his own way, and told him, that if he was resolved to continue in that mind, and thought of nothing but meriting heaven by his obedience, he must be so perfect in it, as to refuse no command, how hard soever it might be to flesh and blood. He did not stand the trial, and, therefore, according to his own way of reckoning and thinking, was a lost man. And what I have to observe to you upon the passage of Scripture now before us, is this: God requires, and cannot but require a perfect obedience from every soul of man at all times; and, because we have it not, he gives, or imputes Christ's righteousness to believers, makes and sees them perfect in him, and accepts his obedience as full payment on their behalf. Now, I ask the question, Will you plead your own obedience to God, as perfect in itself, and fully sufficient to answer all the demands of his law and justice? Will you abide by this plea at the day of judgment? Will you venture all your hopes, your souls, your salvation upon it? Will you say to Christ, as the young man did, "What lack I yet?" You see, at once, that it is a lost case with you, and, if you sincerely desire to be put in the way to eternal life, will be glad to know what ground you must be upon for it. I tell you again, Christ, and the forgiveness which is by him; Christ, and

his righteousness; not yourselves, not your own works, not the perfection of your own obedience; because you have it not to plead, and if you have no other answer to put in when God calls for the book of your hearts and lives, you must be given up to condemnation. But, perhaps, you will say, Why did not Christ tell the young man so? Why did he not inform him, in answer to his inquiry, what foundation he must be upon for eternal life? Why, because he judged it necessary, in the first place, to show him the defects of his obedience, and thereby to convince him of the great mistake he was under, and the desperate hazard he run, in thinking to purchase heaven by it. For till he saw that he was undone in himself, and, instead of proudly challenging God with his keeping the commandments, wanted forgiveness as a sinner, he could not see a need of Christ. We are come to the hard point; no more can you, till you are laid low in your own eyes, and know of a truth, that you can never justify yourselves to God, no not so much as for one hour of your lives. Do this therefore; be humble, beg of God to make you so, confess your sins, confess your desert, that Christ may be precious to you. When you put the question to yourselves, How must I attain to eternal life? let not the answer be, By my own works, or goodness, because you have them not; but remember how the young man failed in the proof of his obedience; remember what a fiery trial you have to go through, if you have only your own righteousness to appear in before God, and this will force you into the door of faith, show you the glory of Christ and his salvation, make you thankful to God for him, and confirm you in the way of a free obedience, in love to him who was obedient unto death to save us from eternal condemnation. For though our own obedience cannot save us of itself, because, as I told you, we can never approve it to

God as absolutely perfect, and free from all spot of sin, (as it must be to justify us) yet it is as much required of us, as if it could, and we had nothing else to trust to; and, if the sin which brings us sorrowing to Christ, and cost him his blood, is not repented of and forsaken; if we do not receive all his commands with the teachableness and simplicity of little children, and are troubled for nothing, so much as our coming short of them, we are not his disciples, we can have no part in his salvation. Whatever we are in our own esteem, we shall be last, that is, nothing, in his. For though the just shall live, and therefore are just, by faith, yet the Scripture knows no faith but that which worketh by love, and keepeth the commandments. Let us, therefore, inquire with true earnestness and all possible sincerity, what we must do to inherit eternal life; and beseech God that we may neither come short of it by trusting in ourselves, nor think we trust in Christ while we refuse him our obedience.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, thy will is perfect; thy commands are pure; thy law is holy, and just, and good; and thou hast in mercy ordained and revealed it for our great benefit. But we have acted contrary to thy will; we have broken thy laws; we have all erred from thy commandments. Enter not into judgment with us, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. Let thy Spirit convince us of sin, and bring us to repentance and acknowledgment of the truth, that we, meekly confessing our vileness, may be received to thy mercy in Jesus Christ, and rejoice in thy peace. Make him the anchor of our hope and the stay of our hearts, when we are oppressed with a sense of our guilt, and enable us to keep ourselves in thy love, and continue steadfast in the way which leadeth to eternal life, by faithfully endeavouring to keep thy com-

mandments; which we humbly beg of thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XLII.

St. Matthew, xx. 1.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder.—The kingdom of heaven is partly in this world; that kingdom, or state, in which we are received to the grace of Christ, and live by his rule. It is proper to observe this, not only that you may understand what is generally meant in this, and the other Gospels, by the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven; but also consider it as your necessary state of preparation for the eternal kingdom of heaven, value the great privilege of belonging to it, and hold it fast as the comfort of your lives. Are Christians *now* of the household of God, his beloved children, rejoicing in their adoption, led by the Spirit, and training up for immortal glory? Then ask yourselves the question, Are *you* separated into this family and kingdom, as members and subjects of it, to partake of its blessings, to be governed by its laws; and do you resolve to live and die in it? For you must first be in and of it here upon earth; and if you live and die out of it, so you will be found at the day of judgment. He who came to set it up in the world, is always ready to set it up in our souls; and you will have a fresh call, this evening, from his own mouth, to enter into it. God grant it may sound effectually into your hearts! It may be the last that some of us will ever have.

Ver. 1. *Which went out early in the morning.*—In the morning of the world, from the day of Adam's fall, at

sundry times, and in divers manners; and the Jews, more especially, had their call early. They, indeed, foolishly supposed they were always to be the only covenanted people and servants of God; and to beat down their presumption in this respect, is the main scope of the parable. Blessed be God, we may be hired into his service. We, too, have had our call early in the morning of our childhood. But to what purpose does Christ make us the offer, if we refuse it? Let us, therefore, have an eye to this in the explanation of the parable, and consider for ourselves whether we have entered into the vineyard, and what we are doing in it.

— *To hire labourers into his vineyard.* — Labourers; mark that. Not idle drones, sleeping over their work; but knowing what it is, and following it with a suitable diligence.

Ver. 2. *And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day.* — The usual wages of a labourer, about eight-pence of our money. But keep it in mind, that Christ's penny is no less than heaven, and you will know at once that the reward is not of debt, but of grace. And need you be told that it is richly worth all your labour?

Ver. 3. *And he went out about the third hour.* — Nine o'clock in the morning. Young men and women, lose not your golden season of coming to Christ. You will be apt to reckon that a great part of your day is yet before you; but take heed that this thought does not seal you up in blindness all your lives. Christ says, Go ye into the vineyard; and his meaning is, with respect to all, the moment you are bidden.

Ver. 4. *And whatsoever is right, I will give you.* — Lord, thou art a gracious master, payest infinitely more than we can deserve, and thy promise is our right. Grant we may not lose it, by refusing thy work.

— *And they went their way.*— What would you have thought of them, if it had been said, they did *not* go? See then, if *you* do not go, how your own consciences will condemn you.

Ver. 5. *Again he went out about the sixth or ninth hour.*— The Jews began their day at six in the morning; so the sixth hour was their noon, &c. Are you in the middle, or the decline of life, and yet out of the vineyard? O! hear your call. You know your day is spending apace.

Ver. 6. *And about the eleventh hour.*— My friends, this is a late hour indeed; the last but one; and to leave all, till then, is most dangerous presumption. But, blessed be the grace and patience of God; there is yet hope for such, if they make haste, and escape for their lives.

— *Why stand ye here all the day idle?*—You may have been a careful, pains-taking man for this world all your life; but this is nothing to Christ. If *his* work has been neglected, this reproof is for *you;* and, if it does not now cut you to the heart, death is at the door, and you are in the utmost danger of being lost for ever. Minister! Are these words nothing to thee?

Ver. 7. *They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us.*— You will not have this to say, that no man hath *offered* to hire *you.* You have had many calls and invitations from Christ, and turned a deaf ear to them all. Nevertheless, he has one more for you, before you drop into the grave. Hear it, and be astonished at his goodness —" Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, " that shall ye receive." I say, old man, or woman, tremble for thy danger, and let thy own conscience tell thee what right thou canst have to receive any thing from thy Lord, but by his own free bounty.

Ver. 8. *So when even was come.* — It will come: Fancy your last breath is departing; and think what a happy

time it will be, if it goes out in blessing the Lord Jesus for bringing you into his vineyard, and calling you to receive your hire.

—*Call the labourers.*— Those who have read and loved the Scriptures; prayed in secret, and with their families; kept the sabbath; frequented the sacrament; used all the means of grace, and sincerely endeavoured to obey all the commandments; and all from a root of faith.

—*Beginning from the last to the first.*—Why so? Why begin with the last? To show that the reward of all is of grace, and the last, by God's free gift, equally entitled to it with the first.

Ver. 11. *They murmured against the good man of the house.* — Concerning the Jews murmuring against the Gentiles for being put on an equality with them in the favour of God, there can be no doubt: but in the other way of interpretation, can it be imagined that any should be displeased at seeing others as amply rewarded as themselves? Yes; as sure as men are apt to over-value themselves, and think too meanly of others. And, I suppose, all are here called upon to know themselves; and reminded, that though their hire is by agreement, yet that agreement is merely of the good pleasure of God.

Ver. 13. *Friend, I do thee no wrong.*— No; blessed God. Thou art good, and dost good. We are unworthy of the least of thy mercies. Humble us in the dust, and deliver us from the guilt of pleading with thee.

Ver. 16. *So the last shall be first, and the first last.*— The Jews, though first called, and first in covenant with God, shall be last, by casting themselves out of it. With respect to others, it does not seem to follow from the parable, that the first, though murmuring, will be utterly rejected; but that all, coming into the vineyard, first and last, altogether shall receive their reward; none having a title to it but by the free grace of God, who is abundant

in mercy to all, and must not be questioned for his manner of dispensing it.

—*For many be called, but few chosen*—To higher degrees of favour; or, not chosen at all. Can you hear this without being concerned for yourselves? Examine yourselves; you see you are not therefore chosen, because you are called; that is, called to be Christians, but only so in name. Consider how, and when, you obeyed your call; and whether you are now labouring in the vineyard, and giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure.

LECTURE.

THE parable of the labourers in the vineyard is God's call to men at all times, and to every one of us in particular, to go into it, whatever time of the day it is with us. By the vineyard, understand the spiritual work which God hath given us to do; with an assurance that, if we follow it with a suitable care and diligence, we shall not fail of our wages. You will be entitled to your penny at the end of it; and God's penny will make you rich for ever. Do you know your work? Did you ever ask yourself what it is? Do you think much of it? And are you come to a resolution to keep close to it, as your great business in the world, and the end for which your life was given you? God's work is soul work; I say, Do you know it? Do you know that you are naturally in a state of great disorder and corruption, that sin has gotten possession of you, and that, if you are not seeking to the Lord for the forgiveness of it, and striving against it in the power of his grace, it will ruin you for ever? Do you know that forgiveness is only by Christ, and the purchase of his blood; that you must receive it by faith as mercy to you a sinner, whoever you are, be thankful to God for it, and faithful to it in a

work of obedience? You are often hearing of these things, that Christ is the Saviour of lost mankind; that self-knowledge brings you to him; that faith receives him; that submission to his teaching proves your interest in him; and that your present peace and everlasting happiness depend upon the interest you have in him. You are taught to say in the Catechism, that you heartily thank God for calling you to this state of salvation, and that you do and will pray to God for grace to continue in the same unto your life's end. Certainly, these are nothing but vain words in your mouths, unless you know what you thank God for; have a lively sense upon your minds of his mercy in Christ, and are effectually stirred up to seek after it. Have you been awakened? Have you heard and obeyed your call? Has it been the great aim and endeavour of your life, ever since you could discern between good and evil, to be God's labourer, keeping your eye upon his service, and working with him day by day for the life of your soul? Or, if not, when did you begin to think of your unhappy condition in sin, and the means of deliverance from it? When were your eyes opened to see your misery and danger? When did the light of God's truth break in upon your minds? When did his call sound into your hearts? Was there ever a time when you said to yourself, I am perishing in sin; I will arise, and go to my Father; I have heard that there is salvation in the name of Jesus; if I may lay all my sins upon him, it is a most inestimable mercy; I will do it as God shall help me without delay, and also gladly lay them down at his feet, and put myself into his hands for a full cure, for recovery from the power as well as the guilt of sin; for the blessing of a new heart to live unto him that died for me, and washed me clean from all spot of sin in his blood? Or if you can say neither of these, neither that you were always working in God's vineyard, nor that

you are in it at present, yet will you go into it now at last, will you hear your call to-day?

My dear friends, if it is a late hour with you, do not wilfully throw it away; if you have hitherto been a dead soul, careless and unawakened, negligent of your work under Christ, and lived without God in the world, I mean without turning to him in a work of faith and repentance, lose not this precious moment which you still have in your hand for eternity, lest the night of darkness come upon you, when no man can work; do not perish for ever. Do not say vainly that you have other business upon your hands. I know you have, and that you must answer to God for your diligence in it; I know you must be careful for an honest livelihood. But if you do not seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place; if you are not convinced of the necessity of caring for the soul, and actually caring for it, so as to keep the worth of it uppermost in your thoughts; if you do not value God's peace, Christ's love, and the grace of the Spirit, above all things in the world; if you live only for this world, never think of your portion in another, and die an unbeliever, it would have been better for you that you had never been born. Think of the words, "call the labourers, and give "them their hire." Think you hear that awful summons. The day is hastening apace towards us, and we know not how soon we may be given up to it. Oh! think of that time when you will be fixed in a state of endless happiness, or eternal separation from God. Think what you are labouring for day by day, and, during your whole abode upon earth, whether for the meat that perisheth, or for that which endureth unto everlasting life, the riches of time, or eternity, God and his favour, Christ and his glory, or a happiness in and from the world, which no man ever found, and would be the greatest of all curses to you, if it hinders you from seeking after a better. Hear

your call once more, and the Lord speak it to your hearts —" Go ye into the vineyard." Remember that the kingdom of heaven, or God's kingdom of grace upon earth, consists only of those who are working with, and under Christ, faithful in his service, and looking for his blessings, and that none else will be entitled to his wages. And let it be your earnest, daily prayer, that as you are called to the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and received into the kingdom by baptism and outward profession, so you may be of the number of the chosen, and joint heirs with him of his everlasting kingdom of glory.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast called us out of darkness into the light of the Gospel, and received us to a covenant of life and peace in thy Son Jesus Christ; give us grace to accept the offer of thy mercy with all thankfulness, and to use it faithfully, to thy glory, and the salvation of our own souls. Thou waitest with great patience and long-suffering for our return to thee, and wilt graciously reward all who are found in thy vineyard; let thy goodness lead us to repentance, and grant that we may enter upon thy service without delay, lest the night of death overtake us, when none can work. As this is the day and hour of thy calling to us, make it the blessed season of our hearing and obeying. Open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace, and fix us in the diligent pursuit of them; that when our day of working is happily ended, we may be sealed up in our graves to the day of redemption, and rise again to be received into thy eternal and glorious kingdom, with all those who come unto thee by Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SECTION XLIII.

St. Matthew, xx. 17.

Took the twelve disciples apart in the way. — May he take us all apart; and tell us effectually of his death, the necessity, the benefit, and the power of it!

Ver. 18. *Behold, we go up to Jerusalem,* &c.—Knowing the work he had to accomplish there, and going with a resolved will to meet his sufferings.

O Jesus! sad was our condition which required such a method of deliverance; and great is thy love to perishing sinners. Shed it abroad in our hearts. We are naturally dead in trespasses and sins, dead to the love of God, and all spiritual feeling; but in the sense of thy love we can regain our lost powers, and lost happiness, love and obey, and be sweetly constrained by it to answer thy design in dying for us, by living unto thee.

Ver. 21. *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*— Supposing, according to the common mistake of the Jews, that it would be an earthly kingdom; and wanting to secure to them the highest places in it.

Ver. 22. *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask.* — Condemning their ambitious design; and at the same time giving them to understand, that, if they had known the nature of his kingdom, they would not have been so desirous of distinction in it, as it would only entitle them to a distinction of suffering.

— *They say unto him, We are able.* — It is probable they did not very well know what he meant by drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism; but, nevertheless, undertook boldly for themselves. How

ignorantly and presumptuously, let their behaviour witness, when they forsook him.

Ver. 23. *Is not mine to give.*—As matter of mere favour: or in his state of humiliation.

—*But it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*—They being prepared, and qualified for it according to his will. And for such, Christ has all power put into his hands, and says, I give, Rev. iii. 21. John x. 28.

Ver. 24. *And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.*—All having the same views of advancement under Christ, and thinking themselves as well entitled to it. We judge very wrong, if we think of the apostles as eminent saints before the descent of the Holy Ghost. We see in them, and it is of great use to observe it, what all men are by nature, and what they may be by, and under, grace. It is also observable, that St. Matthew, the relater, was one of the ten; and yet he publishes the mistakes and defects of himself, and the other disciples, great as they were, in this instance especially, without reserve. This is not the nature of man; and furnishes us with a convincing proof of his regard to truth, and of the truth of the Gospel.

Ver. 26. *But it shall not be so among you.*—Christ was no leveller of offices and civil dignities; of the heart, he was.

—*But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.* Ver. 27. *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*—These are hard sayings; but sufficiently prove to us, what true greatness is, in the esteem of Christ. I verily believe that no man can possibly be happy in himself, till he arrives at this degree of humiliation.

Ver. 28. *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for*

many.—For all who believe and trust in that ransom. O thou disciple of an incarnate God, what art thou doing, when thy heart beats for pre-eminence, and disdains to stoop? And what can lay the axe to the root of our pride, if this does not? Nay, still we can resist both the precept and example of our great Master; and shall for ever be unchanged, without a new nature, and by a new birth of the Spirit.

Ver. 29. *A great multitude followed him.*—How few of them knew what they followed him for! If you think *you do*, the remainder of the chapter will try you.

LECTURE.

One thing I mentioned, which I would here take up again, and open a little farther for your belief, instruction, and comfort, if you desire to be the true disciples and followers of Jesus, viz. concerning the state of the apostles at the time here spoken of. They were under great mistakes about the nature of Christ's kingdom; and, though not without a sincere dependence upon him for eternal life, it appears that, in coming to him, they had worldly advantage too much in view. It was the general opinion of the Jews, that when Christ came he would set up an earthly kingdom, and make them victorious over their enemies. And the apostles were so full of this notion, that whenever, in downright opposition to it, Christ told them of his sufferings and death, though in ever such plain words, they did not understand him. Peter, in particular, chap. xvi., contradicted him boldly, when he was endeavouring to undeceive him, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." But though he rebuked him sharply, "as not savouring the things which be of God, but those which be of men,"

still they all continued in the same mistake; and we are here told of two of them who came to him with this request; and, to make sure work of it, as they thought, brought their mother with them to desire, "that they "might sit, one on his right-hand and the other on the left, "in his kingdom;" thinking of a kingdom in this world, and expecting to have the highest places in it. Which, when the rest understood, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren; supposing that themselves had all as good a right to the highest places under Christ as they, and all alike dreaming of an earthly kingdom; as it seems they did, even after his resurrection, Acts, i. 6., and quite on to the day of Pentecost. For then, and not before, their eyes were thoroughly opened, and their hearts changed; and from that time forward, instead of looking any longer for worldly greatness from Christ, they gloried in nothing but his cross, and in suffering for his sake.

Now, the point arising from hence is this: whatever our state is in respect of saving knowledge, or faithfulness to Christ in a work of obedience, the Holy Ghost can and must, as he only is sent to do, work the same change in every one of us. When we see our sins in the number and greatness of them, we find it hard to trust in the pardoning mercy of God; when the commandments are set before us, as the rule we must, of all necessity, walk by under Christ, we frighten ourselves with the difficulty of them, and are apt to shrink back from our work. Now, look at the apostles, and think what they once were, and what the Spirit of God and of Christ made them. They were not only ignorant and unlearned men, in the lowest rank of life, but strongly prejudiced against the notion of Christ's suffering and dying; and yet, through the power of the Holy Ghost, they were convinced of their mistake, and enabled to preach salvation by Christ cru-

cified, at the hazard of their lives. I say, what cannot we do, one and all, with the same help? Why cannot we believe to the saving of the soul? Why cannot we be true to Christ in a work of obedience, through the power of the same Spirit which changed them into other men, removed the darkness that was upon their minds, and carried them through greater trials than any we have to struggle with? Christ asked the two disciples, "Whether they could drink of his cup, and be baptized with "his baptism?" And when they answered "they could," he told them that indeed they should, knowing how they would afterwards be enabled to do it. It may not be required of us to drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism; that is, to lay down our lives in defence of the truth as he and they did; but then he gives us to understand, that none shall be advanced to the highest place, or to any place, in his kingdom, but those "for "whom it is prepared of the Father;" that is, who are prepared for it according to his will, by his power, and by a belief and practice grounded on the rule of Scripture. And, if we are not prepared and qualified for it, and brought happily to it, the apostles, who were as little qualified for it by nature as we are, and had so much a greater burden laid upon them than we, will rise up against us at the day of judgment. Let us, therefore, see and acknowledge in them what we may be by grace; and beg of God to enlighten our minds and purify our hearts, to keep us low in our own eyes, and make it our only ambition to be prepared for a place at Christ's right-hand, by the same Spirit which guided them into all truth, and supported them in the work they had to do.

PRAYER.

God, who dost teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; grant

unto us, thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

SECTION XLIV.

St. Matthew, xx. 30.

And behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by.—Mark the end of your reading, and hearing of him, in this and all his miracles; it is, that you may know your blindness, and who is to be the restorer of your sight.

—*Cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.*—Why did they cry? They knew they were blind. Why do not you, in sincerity, and with great earnestness? Oh! it is a vain thing to take his name into your mouths, and think you believe in him, without any true knowledge of your case, or lively sense of your want of him.

Ver. 31. *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace.*—They would not for any man's bidding. They were not to be rebuked out of their cure. Probably, they had heard of the fame of Jesus, longed for his coming where they were, and would not lose this precious opportunity. How many have *you* lost?

—*But they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.*—Let who will endeavour to stop your mouths, in the day of your distress for sin, regard them not. Do as the blind men did; cry the more

after Jesus; cry in spite of all the world, "Have mercy on us."

Ver. 32. *And Jesus stood still.*—Their crying stopped him. He knows our case, and does not want compassion for it; but he waits for our cry; he must hear it from our own mouths.

—*And called them and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?*—Jesus is always the same; and these gracious words are now spoken to every one of us, at this very time and place, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Speak, if thou knowest.

Ver. 33. *Lord, that our eyes may be opened.*—Lord! this day; the eyes of our understandings to receive the light of thy truth, and our hearts to receive thee; for they are both shut till thou openest them.

Ver. 34. *And they followed him.*—As we shall, for his teaching, when we truly believe in him for our cure; and, if we have not this proof to give of our faith in him, no other will be sufficient.

LECTURE.

It is a blessed thing to follow Jesus; knowing what he is, and what we are, and coming to him in faith for all his benefits. If we wanted our bodily sight, or had any other grievous distemper, and believed that he could and would cure us, we should certainly put ourselves into his hands, with many thanksgivings to God for having laid our help on one that is mighty; we should cry after him, as the two blind men did, and be very earnest with him to restore us to health or sight. I beseech you, take notice from hence, and learn what a work of faith is. It is the soul's cry after Jesus, for what we want, and cannot give to ourselves; and, if we never were pinched with a sense

of our wants and utter helplessness, we deceive ourselves in thinking that we believe in him; whatever words we may use to this purpose, as put into our mouths by others, though we call him our Saviour, and repeat his name in our creeds and prayers, yet our own hearts were never with him. If then he was present at this time and place, and now speaking the words to you one by one—"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"—What would you say to him? What would you ask of him? What is the relief you would catch at in this blessed moment of your help? Would you say to him, Lord, I am a sinful man, and want forgiveness; I want strength against the power of sin, and would give all the world for a new will to please God in obedience, but find that I am as weak as I am corrupt, and must perish if thou dost not save me? Do you think he can, do you believe he will, and do you really desire it of him in truth and sincerity, so as willingly to submit to his method of cure, and follow all such directions for that purpose as he shall think fit to give you? Will you confess your sins, and the sinfulness of them? Will you gladly lay them upon his head, and think it an unspeakable mercy that you may? Will you purpose to forsake them at his bidding, and be faithful to his teaching in a work of reformation? Tell me not what else you say or do; tell me not of your civility, or honest dealing in the world, or form of religion; come to Christ with a feeling of your distemper, and the wants of your souls, or else there is no faith, no grace, no cure wrought, no sight restored, salvation is not yet come to you; and to come to Jesus is to trust in him for relief to the conscience from the guilt of sin, and the fear of condemnation; accompanied with a desire and purpose to live by his rule, and to keep his commandments.

Sin may not be so heavy a burden, nor so distressing to you, as it is to some others; it may not be necessary

that you should know the exact time or manner in which such a work begun, and happy are they who experience it, however or whensoever it begun; but, if you do not see yourselves undone by sin, make Christ your hope, and receive a law at his mouth, nothing is more certain than that you do not experience it. That this work may be begun, successfully carried on, and happily completed, Christ is read and preached to you every sabbath, and you have the Scripture in your hands to guide you to him, to beget faith in him, and keep you close to him for the life which he only can give. To him then you must go, as you would for ease to a Physician, if you were sick; only with this difference, that whereas all means and helps may fail you in the case of bodily or worldly distress, Christ will never suffer you to go without the relief you want for your souls. Come to him in faith and desire of his benefits, and you shall not be disappointed of your hope. Every miracle he wrought, as I am often telling you, and wish the repetition of it was unnecessary, is a bond put into your hands, with the seal of Heaven to it, that he will fulfil the desire of your hearts, and help you to the utmost of your wants. To what end do you think this miracle of healing wrought upon the two blind men, as well as all the rest, was written and recorded, and is now brought to your remembrance? Was it wrought merely for their sakes? Was it only that you might hear it, and wonder at it, and think no more of it, or make no use of it for yourselves? No; but it was to turn your eyes to him as *your* Saviour, to convince you of his power, and that you might believe in him as still present with all his grace and love, to do for you whatever you ask of him. Read the Gospels with this view, as proving Jesus to be the Christ of God, and presenting him to you in all his miracles as your Jesus, to heal and to save you; let him hear you saying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us," and you may be

as sure that he will have compassion on you, as if you saw him with your eyes, and heard him speak the word for your recovery. What use you have made of the many miracles you have heard from this Gospel of St. Matthew, and how you have profited by them, is best known to God and yourselves. Sure I am, they are your call to Jesus; and I pray God you may hear it, and make it your daily prayer to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

O blessed Jesus, have mercy on us and help us. To thee we come for healing, and by thee to the Father. Open our eyes by the Spirit to see the greatness of our sin, the greatness of our danger, and the glory of thy salvation. By the will of the Father, and moved by thy own bowels of compassion, thou camest from Heaven to seek and to save us, and art with us alway to the end of the world; give us repentance, give us faith, and renew us to the desire and love of holiness; that being washed from our sins in thy blood, we may purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, live in hope, die in peace, be pronounced thy faithful servants, and received to the glory which thou hast purchased for all who come unto God by thee, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XLV.

St. Matthew, xxi. 1.

The First Day of the Holy Week, or Sunday*.

And when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, &c.—We are now to read of Jesus going to Jerusalem to put himself

* Mark, xi. 1—11; Luke, xix. 29—44; John, xii. 12—19.

into the hands of the Jews, to die for our sins. Stop a moment. What is sin, when it could not be purged without his death? This then is the turning point; and here you will either begin to repent and believe the Gospel, or continue sealed up in darkness. You may fancy you trust in him as your Saviour, as thousands do, because you have been taught to call him so; but all he did and suffered will be lost upon you, and you are blind, careless, and unbelieving, if the consideration of his death does not lead you to a right judgment of the heinous nature of sin, convince you of the necessity of faith in him for salvation from it, and turn your wills against it.

Ver. 3. *Straightway he will send them.*—Probably he knew Jesus, had a respect for him, and would have parted with a greater thing at his desire.

Ver. 5. *Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.*—For thy great benefit. Is it thy own desire? Does thy heart burn for his coming to thee with his salvation? To what purpose dost thou read of him, and what can it signify to thee that he came then, or comes to all the world, if he does not come to thee?

—*Meek, and sitting upon an ass.*—Not in a stately manner. What will bring down the pride of our hearts? I suppose that riding upon an ass was no mark of grandeur amongst the Jews at that time, though it is still less so now with us.

Ver. 8. *And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way,* &c.—As they used to do at the creation, or solemn entry of their kings; thus owning Christ for their king.

Ver. 9. *Hosanna.*—That is, Lord, save us. What does thy heart say? Is this the cry of it?

—*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*—Oh! it will be a joyful time, and the true rest of your

souls, when you can bless God for the salvation of Christ. And if you think of it, desire it, and pray for it, he will thus come to you. For this end he came into the world; and for this end we are now reading of him, that we may long and pray for the great blessing of his coming to us.

Ver. 10. *Who is this?*—Can you give the right answer? He is my God, my Jesus, my Saviour, my Beloved. He gave himself for me, and I will give him my heart, hear and obey him, and make it the great business of my life to live with him for ever.

Ver. 11. *This is Jesus the Prophet.*—What a mercy it is that we have such a prophet, to declare the will of God to us, and put us in the way to heaven! And what are we doing, when we pay little regard to his teaching, neglect his word, and have few prayers or none for a blessing upon it?

LECTURE.

After the account of our Lord's birth, teaching, and miracles, we are now come, in the order of this Gospel, to his public entry into Jerusalem, where he was going to finish the great work for which he came into the world, and perfect his obedience, by suffering death upon the cross for our redemption. And this portion of Scripture was written, and has now been read to you, that you might do as the multitude did, cry "Hosanna to the Son "of David," and say with great joy in your hearts, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, "Hosanna in the highest." For what can it signify to you to hear of his coming; that is, with salvation in the name of the Lord to a world of lost sinners, if you are not seeking after it, and made partakers of it, every one of

for yourselves? Do you then know who he is, and what are? Did you ever think what he came for, and what blessedness here spoken of is? This Son of David, cording to the flesh, also was, and is, the eternal Son of most high God; and he came into the world, by the ree and will of the Father, to seek and to save us, to ge our sins, to be our righteousness, to make us the dren of God, to overcome death, to open the kingdom heaven to us, and prepare us for it. Do you know that u are guilty souls, dead in sin, and naturally the children wrath; and that you must have been outcasts from rcy for ever, if Christ had not wrought a great deliver-ce for you, by taking your sin and punishment upon nself, and suffering the curse of it in your stead? Do u understand how vile you are, how lost and helpless in yourselves, how great he is, and every way sufficient for the work he came to do; and can you help saying, with many thanksgivings to God, and great rejoicing in the conscience, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of "the Lord?" Indeed, my friends, this is the trying point, this is all. Say this truly, with fulness of belief, and you are Christians. Say and do what else you will, unless you fly to Christ in the peril of your souls, make him your hope, and bless God for him, all the sins you ever committed, and they are more in number than the hairs of your head, will be laid to your charge. But will they not be laid to our charge, if we lay them upon his head in repentance, and behold him with the eye of faith, as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world? No; not one of them will ever rise up in judgment against us. He bore them all in his own body; and it is the joy of my heart, this day, to know and believe that he did not leave one sin behind him when he ascended the bloody cross. Take this comfort to yourselves; take Christ into your hearts; let them spring forward to meet him in his

grace and love; do not give way to one despairing thought, so long as there is a God in heaven, or a Bible in the world.

It is true, our unworthiness is very great, and we have great cause to be deeply humbled for it; but let not this keep any of us from Christ, instead of driving us to him, being that our danger in sin, misery, and helplessness, was the very thing which brought him into the world to help us. See him as he is, the Son of God, and your Saviour in his blood, and you need not be afraid to know the worst of yourselves. It is your half-belief of Christ, and the fulness of his redemption, together with an ill-grounded trust in yourselves, which both hinders you from seeing the truth of your condition, and damps your joy of faith. And what I have farther to say to you concerning the blessed coming, and blessed Saviour here spoken of, is this; if you have been troubled for sin, and welcome Christ as your relief from the burden of it, and your sole comfort, you will be careful not to offend him by any kind of disobedience. The man who says in his heart, What should I do but for Christ? will be as ready to say, What shall I do for Christ? And when he hears him saying, "If ye love me, keep my "commandments," his answer is, Yes, Lord, thy love is great indeed; and I should think myself the basest of all creatures, and utterly unworthy to be thy disciple, if I lived in opposition to thy known will, or refused to do any thing at thy bidding.

If then we would be the better for his coming, we must answer the whole design of it; we must conform to his rule, and be faithful to him in his commands, repenting of our sins, striving against our corruptions, lamenting our imperfection, growing in grace, and resolving to live and die in his blest obedience. Not to trust in ourselves, or the merit of our own repentance and holiness, in

the highest degree of them we shall ever attain; but because it is the temper and disposition of God's children, the proof of our adoption, a very precious part of our salvation by Christ, and necessary fitness for heaven; and what, therefore, he who so loved us as to wash us from our sins in his own blood, cannot but require of all his disciples. Remember and believe, that through him only we have peace with God, and that he is the Saviour of sinners, in virtue of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. In all your straits and troubles for sin, and when your fears are ready to prevail against you, let the acts, sufferings, and merits of Jesus be the stay of your hearts, and the ground of your confidence towards God. Rest your souls, and the weight of your salvation, upon that saying, "Fear not, "daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, "meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal "of an ass;" in the form of a servant, in the likeness of our flesh; not in the majesty of the Son of God; not in the state of a judge; not to condemn, but to save. But, remember withal, that he is thy King, to rule over thee; that he never gave up that right; that he has marked out for us the way we are to walk in; that he has taught us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as "it is in heaven;" and that we can never say truly, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," nor have any benefit of his coming, unless we resign ourselves to his government, thank God for his teaching as well as death, and make it the burden of our prayers to be established in the faith of his love, and the love of his commands.

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord, and blessed be he that cometh in thy name, to bring us the glad tidings of

reconciliation with thee, to purge our sins by the sacrifice of himself, to quicken our dead souls, and to set up in us thy kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Give us grace to receive it with all humility and thankfulness, to keep thy great goodness always in remembrance, and be faithful to it in obedience. Let thy well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, be the refuge and stay of our souls, and the ground of our confidence towards thee; that whenever our guilty consciences rise up against us, and the sense of our vileness terrifies us, we may be kept from despair, and delivered from all our fears, by a steadfast faith in thy mercy, and by looking to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Prepare us, we beseech thee, to receive him in repentance and faith, and with an earnest desire of his blessings; that knowing the grace and power of his first coming, in the forgiveness of our sins, and the purity of our lives, we may behold him with joy unspeakable, in the glory of his second coming, and be received into thy everlasting kingdom in heaven, through the same Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XLVI.

ST. MATTHEW, xxi. 12.

The Second Day.*

AND Jesus went into the temple of God. — So come, Lord, into our souls, to make them pure, and sacred temples of the Holy Ghost, and cast every thing out of

* Mark, xi. 12—19. Luke, xix. 45—48. John, xii. 20—43.

them which is unsuitable to the place of God's residence: 1 Cor. vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

Ver. 12. *And cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple*—The outer court of it, in the open air. Their pretence for keeping a market there, was to accommodate those who came to the feast with beasts for sacrifice, &c. But Christ judged this to be a profanation of the holy place, and would not suffer it to be converted to common use on any account whatsoever.

Ver. 13. *My house shall be called the house of prayer.*—Now lift up your hearts, in a devout wish that *this* may always be the house of prayer to you, of heavenly thoughts, holy breathings after God, and reverent attention to his word.

—*But ye have made it a den of thieves.*—Did he know them to be remarkably such? Or is it intimated that injustice, which in God's eyes is robbery, sticks close to buying and selling?

Ver. 14. *And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.*—Our blessed Saviour's zeal for the house of God does not make him inattentive to the wants of the afflicted. We seldom read of the exercise of his power in judgment, but often see it exerted in acts of mercy. Wherever he was, in the temple or in a private house, in a populous city or in a desert, we find him surrounded by miserable objects, whose application for help he never rejected. We may learn from hence the kindness of his compassionate heart, and how ready he is at all times to heal the maladies of our souls. If we are sensible of our spiritual blindness and inability to walk in his ways, we do not look up to him in vain.

Ver. 15. *And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, &c.—they were sore displeased.* Ver. 16. *And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say?*—

Those who will not cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David," hate and are sore displeased with those that do, and labour all they can to stop their mouths.

—*And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read?*—Yes; a thousand times, without understanding it.

—*Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.*—Let us beseech God that this may be verified in us; as it will, if we resign ourselves in humility, and an unfeigned sense of our blindness, to the great Teacher. Without him we are all babes, one as well as another, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned; and he who alone teaches any, can teach all effectually, and make the meanest and most ignorant praise God for their conversion by him.

Ver. 17. *And he left them*—To their own hardness and impenitence. O Jesus! what are we when thou leavest us? And why are we given up to so sore a judgment, but because we first leave thee?

Ver. 18. *Now in the morning, as he returned into the city*—In the morning of this same day.

—*And when he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it, &c.*—He who could blast the fig-tree with a word speaking, knew, before he came to it, that he should find no fruit on it. The design of his coming to it, was to teach us the dreadful issue of unfruitfulness, the impossibility of our bearing fruit when he withdraws his blessing, and the miraculous power of faith and prayer.

The Third Day. *

Ver. 20. *And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying*—That is, on the morning of the third day, as the times are exactly distinguished by St. Mark, chap. xi.

Ver. 21. *If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall say*

* Mark, xi. 20—33. xii. 13. Luke, xx. 21. John, xii. 44—50.

unto this mountain, &c.—Did he say this only to the disciples, concerning outward miracles? No, verily; but we all want such a wonder-working faith for our own healing. When, therefore, thy temptation is strong, and thy sin hard to be overcome, never think of removing this mountain in thy own power, but fly to thy almighty, compassionate Saviour, who can both cleanse from sin, and give strength against it.

Ver. 21. *And doubt not.*—This is not added in vain. When we have a lively sense of our guilt and weakness, it is hard not to doubt: but call to mind what you know of Jesus, and that he came into the world for this very end, to convince you of his power and will to help you; that in the belief of it you might find rest to your souls, and be delivered from all your fears.

Ver. 22. *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*—My friends, this is a very comfortable assurance from Christ's own mouth, and great encouragement to prayer, if we did but know what we want, and what we should ask. See first whether your great want is not want of desire for spiritual blessings; for without it there is neither faith nor prayer.

LECTURE.

THE passages to be considered from the portion of Scripture which has now been read, are Christ's casting the buyers and sellers out of the temple; the displeasure of the Pharisees, when they saw his miracles, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the "Son of David!" and his speaking to and blasting the barren fig-tree.

Did Christ cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and

the seats of them that sold doves, with a holy indignation against them for carrying on their worldly traffic there? Take notice of this. They had some pretence for doing what they did, viz. to have sheep and oxen ready at hand for those who came to offer sacrifice, and to furnish them with the tribute money which they paid yearly to the temple, in exchange for other things. I say, this was a plausible pretence for what they did: but it was nothing to Christ; he would at no rate suffer the place of God's worship, nor any part belonging to it, not the outer court of the temple, to be profaned by any kind of worldly business. I say, take some notice of this, and let Christ teach you what regard you are to have for the places more immediately set apart for God's worship and service. Let God's house be the house of prayer to you; and when you come there think of nothing but the proper business of it. Go directly into the church, and call to mind what you come there for, whose presence you are in, and what wants you have to be supplied. Leave your worldly thoughts behind you; leave your common talk without the gates; the church, or church porch, is no place for it, and I wish you would be advised in this respect. You would, if you yourselves were the temples of the living God. If you desired that Christ should dwell in you, and cast every thing out of you which is unsuitable to so holy a presence, you would be prepared for the instruction now before you, hear him saying, "My house is the house "of prayer," and reverence it as such, by putting your souls into a proper form and posture for the sacred business of it as often as you come there. And let this be the great use and improvement of what you have been hearing. Say to yourselves, God will dwell in my heart, as his temple, if I desire it, and will receive the Holy Spirit into it to cleanse it for him; and pray for yourselves, that you may be his sons and daughters, his

people, pure Christians, and such as he will own, by casting every thing out of your hearts with which he cannot dwell.

When Jesus had cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, we read that the blind and the lame came to him there, and he healed them. As these are some of the last of our Lord's miracles mentioned by St. Matthew, let me press it upon you once more, as I have done all along in the reading of this Gospel, to consider the end and design of them as to yourselves, that you may come to him in faith for your own cure, forgiveness of sins, and new hearts turned to God. For you are by nature the blind and the lame; ignorant of your condition, and blind to your true interest; averse to the will of God, and unable of yourselves to turn to him, and walk in the way of his commandments. And till you know it, and look to Christ for healing, whatever you hear of his miracles, whatever you believe of his power, will be without effect as to you; he is not your Helper and Saviour. And let not the meanness of your condition, or want of learning, be any discouragement to you; as you love your souls, make it not a pretence for living and dying without the knowledge of Christ, and, consequently, of salvation by him. Hear him saying, "Out "of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast per-"fected praise." Beg of God that his praise may be perfected in you, by your knowledge and joyful acceptance of his grace and mercy in Christ Jesus; as it certainly will, if you resign yourselves in humility, and with an unfeigned sense of your blindness, to Christ the great Teacher. Without him we are all babes, one as well as another, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned; and he who alone teaches any, can teach all effectually, and make the meanest and most ignorant praise God for their conversion by him. And though all the world

should be displeased with you when you are in earnest in turning to Christ, and do all in their power to stop your mouths when you are crying after him, regard them not; when you know your want of him, and find of a truth that you must be undone without him, keep close to him, keep on praying. He blasted the fig-tree, on purpose that you might know what will be the end of an unfruitful state, and what prayer will do for you. It is said, "the "disciples marvelled when they saw how soon the fig-tree "withered away." First, take heed that this be not your doom. Then remember the application which Christ himself made of this miracle, viz. to convince us of the mighty power of the prayer of faith. Our corruption is great, our weakness is great, and we might well be daunted at the sight of them, if we had nothing to trust in but ourselves; but the mercy of God is above all our sins, and his strength will be our support; and we are as sure, as his word and promise can make us, that whatever we ask of him, trusting in his goodness, and believing his power, will be done for us, though ever so difficult in itself. We cannot remove the mountain, but nothing is impossible with God; and every time we fall down upon our knees, we pray for as great a miracle, if we know for what we pray.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, pour upon us the Spirit of grace and supplications, to receive the instructions and follow the doctrine of the great Teacher, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, with all humility and thankfulness. As thou hast taught us what is acceptable unto thee, and delivered to us the rule of holy living; we beseech thee, turn the desire of our hearts to it, and all our hearts to thee, in prayer for a blessing upon what we learn from thy holy word. Convince us of our blindness, corruption,

and weakness, that we may come to Christ for help, rejoice in his salvation, and in the power of the Holy Ghost be enabled to do whatever thou requirest of us. Make us thy own people, make our souls and bodies thy living temples; that, consecrating ourselves to thee in faith and purity, and reverencing thee in our hearts, we may gladly embrace all occasions of presenting ourselves before thee in thy house, as the house of prayer, worship thee in spirit and in truth, whilst we live here upon earth; and sing praises to thee for ever in heaven, with all those whom thou hast redeemed to thyself by the blood of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

SECTION XLVII.

St. Matthew, xxi. 24.

I will also ask you one thing—For their farther instruction, if they would have been sincere with him; for their confusion, as they were not.

Ver. 25. *And they reasoned with themselves*, &c.—Look at thyself. This was miserable shuffling, but is very common. There is no acting avowedly against conscience and reason; but the misfortune is, we have always some kind of sophistry at hand, to stifle the one, and blind the other, when we have no mind to be convinced.

Ver. 27. *We cannot tell.*—They would not.—*Neither tell I you*—is the most grievous of all curses. Lord, grant we may never bring it upon ourselves, nor deprive ourselves of the benefit of thy teaching, by our insincerity and opposition to the truth.

Ver. 28. *Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.*—So

he says to us all every day concerning the great work we have to do under him.

Ver. 29. *He answered, and said, I will not.*—What wouldst thou think of thy heart, if it was as well known to thyself as it is to God, that it often says this?

—*But afterward he repented, and went.*—Observe; repentance is an effectual change of the mind, and actual going into the vineyard.

Ver. 31. *The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*—The very refuse of mankind sooner repent and turn to Christ, accept grace, and enter upon his way of salvation, here called the kingdom of God, than those who are high in their own and the world's esteem; and having an outward decency of behaviour to pride themselves in, stand upon it with God, and see no need of conversion.

Ver. 32. *For John came to you in the way of righteousness,* &c.—In vain does John, or Christ, come in the way of righteousness, as teachers and examples of it, to those who think they know and are possessed of it before.

LECTURE.

When the chief priests and elders of the people asked Jesus, "by what authority he did these things," making a public entry into Jerusalem, receiving the acclamations of the multitude, as he that was to come in the name of the Lord, the blessed Son of David, the Messiah, and casting the buyers and sellers out of the temple, instead of giving them satisfaction in the point, and telling them plainly who he was, he evaded their question, by asking them another which he knew they would not answer. Not that he feared the worst they

could do to him; for he was ready to offer himself to death, and came to Jerusalem for that purpose. Let us then consider what we have heard. It may seem strange that He who was the light of the world, and came to save mankind, should leave them in the dark concerning himself, and refuse them the information they seemed to desire, as it was a matter on which their salvation depended. But the truth is, their design was not to learn of him, but to ensnare him; and he, who knew what was in their hearts, and how utterly unprepared they were to profit by his instruction, gave them such an answer as might lead them into the knowledge of themselves, and, upon the whole, refused to acquaint them who he was, and by what authority he acted.

You see then, in this instance, how we must be qualified for Christ's teaching, and why we are, generally speaking, so little better for it. If there is an honest heart, and a willing mind, sincerely desirous of saving knowledge, he is ready for us; he will not suffer us to be ignorant, or deceived. If there is no such will and desire, no disposition to hear the truth from his mouth, nothing but guile and deceit in the heart, he may, and does frequently, leave us to ourselves; and that is just the same with respect to our souls, as it would be to our bodies, or to the earth, if the sun was to withdraw his light; we are in horrible darkness all our lives, and understand nothing so as to come to conversion and healing. Take heed, therefore, that Christ does not speak these words to you. For I appeal to yourselves; where is the difference between his saying, "Neither tell I you," that is, never teaching us any thing, and our stopping our ears, and hardening our hearts, against what he does teach us? And such is the condition of all those who neglect the Scripture; and though they are baptized in the name of Christ, and often hear him spoken

of as the Saviour of the world, yet, not knowing what they want him for, desire none of his blessings. He came with authority from God to open the kingdom of heaven, and they wilfully shut it against themselves. He tells them over and over again who he is, and brings them the glad tidings of salvation, and they remain in woful ignorance of him, and never ask their hearts what they shall gain or lose, as they do or do not receive him. Are you concerned in what I am now saying? Do any of you set so little value upon Christ, and your portion in him, as not to study and take pains to know what you must do to obtain and secure it? Has he given you means of saving knowledge in abundance, put the book of Scripture into your hands to guide you to heaven, and do you let it lie in dust upon your shelves, week after week, without looking into it? Or if you do sometimes cast an eye upon it, is it for a right end, and with a serious and godly purpose, with thankfulness to God for the light he has given you, with prayer to have it shine into your hearts, with earnest desire to know as exactly as you can who Christ is, by what authority he speaks, and what is the will of God for your salvation? Think of what you have heard from this chapter; think of his coming in the name of the Lord with a message of peace to a condemned world, with the offer of life to mankind dead in trespasses and sins; think of his going to Jerusalem to be made a sacrifice of atonement; ask yourselves the meaning of these things; and then think how sad your condition will be if he does not come to you in the truth and power of his teaching, to give you the knowledge of himself as the Saviour in his blood, and the Lord our righteousness; to turn you from darkness to light, and put those words into your mouths, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

And let us observe carefully from this passage of Scripture, that though we are ever so well instructed in

the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine, it will not make us his disciples, if it is not received into the ground of an honest and good heart. It is not our Christian name and profession that will entitle us to this blessedness. Obedience is Christ's peremptory demand upon all that call him Lord, and one of his choicest blessings; and when he asks the question concerning the two persons, one of whom readily promised to go and work in the vineyard, but went not—the other, who at first refused, afterwards repented and went—"Whether of them twain did the will of his Father?"—he gives us plainly to understand that nothing will be accounted to us of God for duty, nor prove us to be his children, but entering upon his work. This is the test we must all be brought to at the great day of account; and, therefore, what we should bring ourselves to before that time comes. Publicans and harlots, that is, persons of the worst characters, may repent, and if they do, will find mercy; but whatever we think of ourselves, the kingdom of heaven cannot receive us, unless we are found in the way of righteousness which John preached, and Christ confirmed, and has bound upon us by his authority.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who hast sent thy blessed Son a light into the world, and givest thy Spirit to guide us into all truth; grant us grace thankfully to receive, and obediently to follow, the doctrine he has delivered to us in thy name. Let the study of thy word be our constant employment, and the delight of our souls, that we may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. From all blindness and hardness of heart, from all guile and insincerity, good Lord, deliver us. Help us to discover and remove all the impediments to thy coming and gracious presence in our souls. Open our eyes, turn us from darkness to light, confirm us in the faith of thy

mercy, and make us fruitful in all good works. Grant that, by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and, by thy merciful guiding, may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XLVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, xxi. 33.

THERE was a certain householder which planted a vineyard —The Jewish church. Apply what is said to yourselves, and to your own state and condition under the Gospel.

—*And hedged it round about,* &c.—Nothing was wanting on his part to put it in a condition of bearing fruit. What has not God done for *you?* You are his vineyard, planted by Christ. You have his word with you, hear it read and preached, are commanded to pray for a blessing from heaven, and expect the Spirit to give an increase.

Ver. 34. *He sent his servants,* &c.—The prophets, one after another, to the Jews; the apostles, in their writings to you; his ministers at all times. He sends to you this very hour, in these very words now read by me. Are you ready with your fruit? If you are not, think what you have to do for the remainder of your lives. You have yet a little precious time in your hands. Remember that last of all the Lord himself cometh. How sad will be your condition if you have no fruit for him at the hour of death!

Ver. 35. *And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one,* &c.—Men are always the same; and if they are not ready for Christ, will beat and kill his servants.

Ver. 37. *But, last of all, he sent unto them his Son.*—What patience, what love was here! that, after all their

contempt of him, and ill usage of his messengers, he should send his Son to them!

Blessed God, thou didst send him to *us*, when we were enemies to thee by wicked works, and perishing in our sins. Grant that we may receive him as thy Son, and our only Saviour!

Ver. 39. *And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him*—As all do in effect, who will not repent and turn to God, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to save them from the guilt and power of their sins.

Ver. 41. *They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men*—The Jews, and all others, in hell, who, like them, reject Christ. He made them own the justice of their condemnation, and pronounce sentence upon themselves.

—*And will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen*, &c.—To all the other nations of the earth; to *us*. God help us, and make us walk worthy of the mercy he has showed us, by bringing forth the fruit he expects to find in us, faith and holiness!

Ver. 42. *The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner*—For strength and ornament. Such miserable builders there are at all times. Many amongst us reject this stone with as much scorn as the Jews did. Many, though they do not reject it in avowed unbelief, yet throw it aside, and make no more use of it, as to any work of spiritual building, than if they had it not.

—*This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*—God did this, by raising him from the dead, setting him at his own right hand, and making that same Jesus, who was crucified, both Lord and Christ. Let him be thine. He is made the head of the corner, that we may make him so to ourselves, elect and precious. And, oh! that we might all say, in the power of a true faith,

and our conversion to God by him, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!"

Ver. 43. *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you.* —It will be taken from all for the same reason; that is, all the blessings and benefits of it will be lost to us by our unbelief and unfruitfulness.

Ver. 44. *And whosoever shall fall on this stone*— Stumble at Christ, his word and doctrine; does not receive him, or is no better for him.

—*Shall be broken.*—Does it to his own great damage; and is in danger of perishing, if he does not repent.

—*But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*—The fall of it was heavy upon the Jews; it will be heavier still, upon all unbelievers under the Gospel, when he comes to judgment.

Ver. 45. *They perceived that he spake of them.*—And were only the more enraged by it. Lord, when thou speakest of us, and against us, let it be for our conviction; for thou speakest in love, and smitest only to heal us.

Ver. 46. *They feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*—The *people* were forward to own him for a prophet, when the chief priests and learned Pharisees were blind. Observe this again; and never say that your hearts are beyond the power of God, and that he cannot make you take Christ for your prophet, believe and obey him.

LECTURE.

If we were in a state of pure submission to the teaching of Christ, we should be able, with great ease and readiness, to apply whatever we read in Scripture to ourselves, and convert it to our own use and benefit: for

it speaks alike to men at all times, and every age, and all persons are alike concerned in the instruction it holds forth to us, and alike called upon to make their own advantage of it. For instance; in the parable we have now been hearing, Christ speaks particularly to, and of the Jews, and of the destruction which was coming upon them for slighting all the means which God had used for their reformation; ill treating and persecuting the messengers he sent to them from time to time, and, at last, filling up the measure of their iniquities by killing his Son. Now, if you should ask, what is this parable to us, and how are we concerned in it? I would desire you to observe and consider what instruction an attentive, serious reader of Scripture would draw from it, and how we may all make it profitable to our own souls. Were the Jews favoured of God more than any other nation; received into covenant with him as his own people; living under his immediate government and protection; and heirs of his promises? And was the threatening we here read of, "that on whomsoever the stone should fall "it would grind him to powder," more especially levelled against them, and not many years after actually executed upon them, in the sorest judgments that ever befel any people? O Christian, "if God spared not the natural "branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." Here is a terrible warning to all flesh. Wherever sin is found, the nature of it is to give us up to destruction. For God hates it alike in all persons and places: and in vain do we boast ourselves in the name of Jesus, and expect favour at the hands of God, on account of our baptism and Christian profession, if we do not make it good by the purity of our lives. We cannot be more his people than the Jews were; and for the same reason that he punished them, we may be sure he will reject us, when-

ever, by our sins, we provoke his displeasure, and render ourselves unworthy of his mercy.

Consider, therefore, what you read, and learn from this example, that no profession, name, or outward privileges, will be your security in the day of judgment; but, instead thereof, an aggravation of your sin and punishment, if you continue unreformed, and abuse the advantages which God has put in your power. And if you are a conscientious reader of Scripture, and receive it as the word and testimony of God, you will look narrowly at this parable, and ask yourself, as you will answer it to your soul, whether the whole, or any part of it, belongs to you. The vineyard was the Jewish then, is now the Christian church, planted by God, and put into a condition of bearing fruit. Think, O man, whoever thou art that hearest this, has God done all that was necessary, and more than thou couldest expect, to bring thee to a fruit-bearing state, and is the day coming when he will look for his fruit at thy hands? Has he not sent his messengers, his holy prophets and apostles, to thee? Have they not brought thee light from heaven, delivered to thee all that was put into their hearts, and made known to thee the will of God for thy salvation, and is not thy minister appointed to bring it continually to thy remembrance? Is not the book of Scripture, which thou hast in thy hands, an account of what God has been doing in the world, from the beginning of it, for the recovery of lost mankind? Is not the Lord Jesus Christ, his only Son, therein revealed to thee as thy Saviour, to purge thy sins with his own blood, to set thee in the way of life, to bring thy straying heart back again to God, and make thee a new creature fit for heaven? I say, bethink yourselves what effect all this has had upon your souls. Do you reverence the Son? Is Christ precious

to you? Have you fruit for him? Do you pray? Do you hear him with deep attention, speaking to you in his word? Do you receive it with great thankfulness to God? Do you make it the guide of your consciences? Do you think it your bounden duty to live unto him that died for you? If you do not, but make little account of his bloodshedding and teaching, neither knowing what you want him for, nor blessing God for him, nor desiring his salvation, nor choosing to be governed by him; I must tell you the truth, you are the same men, whatever else you do, whatever you may think of yourselves, and have the same hearts with those who said, "This is the heir; come, "let us kill him." Beware, therefore, lest, by rejecting him in unbelief, or refusing his work, and having no fruit to show for yourselves, you read your doom in those words, "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be "broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind "him to powder." If Christ is not the rejoicing of your souls as your Saviour; sent of God to deliver you from the guilt and power of your sins; to take that burden from your consciences, and bear rule in your hearts, perceive and confess this day that the parable speaks to you; not to fret and harden yourselves against it, but to beseech God that it may be the opening of your eyes, and that you may make haste and escape for your lives; knowing that the time is coming on apace, when the Lord of the vineyard will require an account of what we have all been doing in it, and render to every man according to his work.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who hast called us to the knowledge of thy grace and mercy in Jesus Christ; make us, we beseech thee, thy own people, in truth and purity, and grant that we may give all diligence to make our calling and election

sure, by living unto him that died for us. From all blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us, and enable us this day, and all the days of our lives, to search and examine ourselves by the doctrine of thy holy word. Let thy light and thy truth, which thou hast sent down from above, guide our feet into the way of peace; and as thou hast given us thy only Son to be a sacrifice of atonement for all our sins, give us grace to receive him in all his offices, as our Saviour, Teacher, and Lawgiver; that, rejoicing in thy salvation, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, for the sake, and through the alone merits of the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XLIX.

St. Matthew, xxii. 2.

The kingdom of heaven, &c.—In its present state, as beginning here upon earth, though ending in heaven, considered with respect to our entrance into it, continuance and improvement in it now whilst we live.

—*Which made a marriage for his Son.*—Believers know how to conceive of this from other parts of Scripture, as a strict marriage with the King's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in which we are one flesh, and one spirit with him: and, in virtue of this union, received to a full participation of his merits and perfect righteousness, brought into a fruit-bearing state, and live in subjection to him as our Lord and Husband.

Ver. 3. *To call them that were bidden.*—The Jews. It was the will of God that they, as the seed of Abraham, and his covenanted people, should be first invited. But you will perceive in what follows, that we are now invited

as well as they; and, therefore, in the opening of the parable, must apply every part of it to ourselves. Blessed be God, all are bidden. You have your call in these words, this very hour, to the marriage; that is, as you have heard, to be joined in marriage with Christ, that he may take us, with our sins, to himself, and we may take him to purge the guilt, and deliver us from the power of sin, and present us to God in himself.

—*And they would not come.*—See here the cause of man's damnation—an opposing will.

Ver. 4. *Behold, I have prepared my dinner.*—It is of God's preparing, and salvation is freely offered to us. Behold, also, the riches of God's patience and forbearance; and how he allures us, by setting before us the plenty of good things he has provided. We might be ashamed to refuse his first invitation; let us not harden ourselves against a second. We should come at once, if he called us to nothing else but oxen and fatlings.

—*All things are ready.*—The Saviour, in all his offices, always; peace with God, rest for the soul in his favour, and newness of life by the Spirit.

—*Come unto the marriage.*—Think who says, Come, and to what grace and mercy you are invited. Think you hear this voice now from heaven, and that you may never hear it again. Are you come? If you are not, and will not, what further proof do you need of the desperate wickedness, and natural aversion of your heart from God?

Ver. 5. *But they made light of it,* &c.—Merchandise, and the farm, must not be neglected. The Scripture is as much for honest industry as any book in the world. Nevertheless, the preferring of any thing to God, to our interest in Christ, and the grace of the Gospel, is a damnable state, and a great part of mankind are ruined by the necessary business of the world. You think,

verily, you do not make light of the invitation; and yet you may bring the matter to a short issue with yourselves. Do you read the Scripture, to know what you are invited to, and with prayer to have it opened to you? Do you rejoice to hear of God's love in Christ, and is it the great wish of your hearts to be partakers of it?

Ver. 6. *And the remnant*, &c.—This is mentioned as a still higher degree of wickedness. Such is the nature of men; and such too often the return they make to those who are sent to them with the truth, and declare it faithfully.

Ver. 7. *The King was wroth*, &c.—This part of divine revelation is sadly slighted. We do not believe God's anger or righteous judgment, though the Scripture so plainly declares it, and abounds with examples of it; and this threatening, especially, was fully executed upon the Jews, for a warning and instruction to mankind.

Ver. 8. *They which were bidden were not worthy.*—Called, though unworthy; and always unworthy of so great a mercy; but, absolutely and finally unworthy by their refusal of it, or living unreformed under it.

Ver. 9. *Go ye, therefore, into the highways*, &c.—To the Gentiles; to us, who sat in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death, that all the ends of the world might remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord. Blessed be God, here is no exception of any; the invitation is as much made to every one of us, as if our names had been particularly set down in writing.

Ver. 10. *So those servants went out.*—The apostles, and a great company of preachers. They still speak to, and invite us in their writings; and others in their words, by commission and authority from Christ.

—*Bad and good.*—The kingdom of heaven here upon earth, or Christ's church, consists of a mixture of

good and bad; and many are gathered into it by baptism and outward profession, who do not truly belong to it. Consider upon what ground you stand forth. Attend carefully to what follows.

Ver. 11. *And when the King came in to see the guests.*— Where shall we hide ourselves from that eye? O! where from our own, in the day when the King comes in to see the guests, if we have not a wedding-garment? For we shall then be as naked and open to ourselves, as we are always to him. God be merciful to us, and bring us to such a sight of ourselves *now*, as may qualify us to understand the design of the Gospel, and prepare us for the mercy of it!

— *He saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment.* — What can that be but faith in the righteousness of Christ, and the holiness which springs from it, or a conscience purged from guilt, and a heart from the love of sin?

Ver. 12. *And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither*, &c. — What vain confidence is this, and upon what pretence art thou here, in a garb so different from the rest, and with a heart so unsuitable to the place and company? Hear God now speaking to thee in love, and whilst there is hope: "Why dost thou call thyself a "Christian, and expect to be owned as such, without "taking Christ for the covering of thy soul, and being "clothed with the graces of the Spirit?" My friends, how dreadful to hear it said, or but to think it may be said, this is no place for *thee!* and not have a word to reply.

— *And he was speechless.* — What will you have to say then for your good hearts and good meanings, smooth life or good nature, if you have not been rooted and grounded in Christ, and followers of him in faith and love?

Ver. 13. *Bind him hand and foot,* &c.—O severe judgment, and yet kind warning! Mercy waits on us, pleads with us, and calls aloud to us now; but, as sure as you hear these words, will be at an end with you for ever, if you do not embrace and make use of it whilst you live. To be cast out of the place of feasting, finely illuminated, and furnished with every thing to gratify and delight the senses, into outer darkness, is a faint, and but a very faint, resemblance of the misery of eternal separation from the splendour and glories of heaven, and confinement to the horrible darkness of the bottomless pit.

Ver. 14. *For many are called, but few are chosen.*—All are called that they might be chosen; and, then, why are they not? They will find the answer in themselves. You have heard it already; they *will* not come, they make light of the call, think more of the world than of Christ, and will not seek to him according to the will of God.

LECTURE.

THE kingdom of heaven in this parable, and generally in the Gospels, is the state and condition of mankind under Christ in this world, as they are called to be partakers of his blessings. For by the kingdom of heaven here spoken of, as consisting of a mixture of good and bad, cannot be understood the kingdom of heaven after death, into which none who are unworthy will be admitted; but, as I am telling you, the state of mankind under the Gospel, or Christ's kingdom here upon earth. Of this kingdom we are the visible people and subjects, who profess to believe in his salvation, to be governed by him, and to prepare for his coming; when we shall either be received into his everlasting kingdom of glory, or shut

out of it for ever. And, if you are in earnest with God, and your souls, in reading the Scripture, receive it as the counsel and will of God for your salvation, and desire in truth and singleness of heart to reap the benefit of it, you will ask yourselves some such questions as these concerning the parable now before us. Who is the inviter? Who are the invited? What is the marriage to which they are invited? What is required of them in order to their coming to it? What will entitle those who do come to the esteem and approbation of the Master of the feast? The Inviter is God, and of his own free grace and mercy. The invited are first, and principally, the Jews, his own people. And when they not only refused the invitation for worldly reasons, but persecuted and slew the messengers that were sent to them, command was given to bring in all the other nations of the earth; so that the wedding was furnished with guests, of which number you are by baptism and outward profession. But do you know what the marriage is to which you are invited? It is to be espoused to the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be made bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and so joined to the Lord as to be one spirit; he taking us to himself, with all our poverty, misery, and sin, foul and spotted, vile and abominable as we are, and giving himself to us with all he has, and is, his love, his heart, his blood, his righteousness, his sonship, his dearness to God, his heaven. How wonderful is this! and what reason have we to say, with admiration and great astonishment, "Behold, what manner of love "the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we," poor worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, "should be "called," and actually be, "the sons of God," in virtue of our union with his well beloved Son, and by his right and title.

But, I beseech you, call to mind that in this, as well

as all other marriage-contracts, there must be a consent of both parties. If Christ gives himself to us, with all his blessings, with his whole self, he expects that we should give ourselves to him freely and fully, rejoicing in the offer he makes us, and resolving to forsake all other for him. And, know to your great comfort, that, for the present, or at the time of your entering into this state, he requires nothing of you but your cordial, joyful acceptance of him. When you think who he is, and what you are, you will stand amazed at the tender he makes you, and be looking out for some kind of portion to bring him some goodness or worthiness of your own; but you must let that alone for ever. God gives him, and he gives himself to us, because we are helpless and perishing without him; and if you do not always keep his love, his goodness, his condescension, separate in your minds from any goodness or worthiness of your own, any thing you are or do, you do not take him upon his own terms. He knows that we have nothing but sin and misery belonging to us, and till we know and confess, from the bottom of our hearts, that we have nothing else, and believe that he is willing to take us as we are, he does not give himself to us. Indeed, my brethren, these are glad tidings to a world of polluted, guilty creatures, and we should leap for joy to hear them. But, alas! the generality give but cold entertainment to the offer of Christ, and his riches; and if you would examine your consciences this night before you go to sleep, I fear you would find, either that the world shuts him out of your hearts, or that you will neither part with your sins for him, nor acknowledge your vileness in sin; and so you come to the feast of his providing without a wedding-garment. By which I understand chiefly, the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, because our own cannot endure the pure eye of God; and which, as it was wrought by him for our sakes, and not for his own, who

needed it not, so it becomes ours by our union with him, is accounted to us of God for our fulfilling of the law, and appointed by him for our perfect cleanness in his sight. And this robe faith puts upon us, that is, when it makes us vile and impure in our own eyes, strips us of all pretensions to a justifying righteousness of our own, accepts Christ for salvation, and gives to God the glory of his grace, and of all we have or hope for.

But though we must, of necessity, have this garment to appear in before God, and the gift of it is unspeakably precious, and what we all want for our eternal justification, yet you must be well aware that it is no covering for an unchristian life, or a rotten heart. For "every man "that hath this hope in him," who hopes to sit down with Christ in his kingdom, "purifieth himself even as he is "pure." He knows from all Scripture, that if he would be owned by Christ as his disciple, and a member of his body, he must live by his rule, and take his words for the guide of his heart and conscience. And he comes to him also for this end, that he may be instructed by him in the will of God, and made "meet to be a partaker of "the inheritance of the saints in light;" remembering always, that, "without holiness no man shall see the "Lord;" and that though we are perfect, and accepted only in Christ, yet we must prove our faith by its fruits, and be daily on our knees to God, to keep us in the way that leadeth to everlasting life.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who invitest us to partake of the blessings which thou hast prepared for us in thy Son Jesus Christ; give us grace to come in upon thy call without delay. Deliver us from the dreadful guilt of despising thy great mercy, or living unworthy of it. Call powerfully to every soul here present, thou who workest

in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Convince us of our great impurity, and bring us to the fountain which thou hast opened for sin and uncleanness; that, being washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed to the love of holiness, by the effectual working of the Spirit, we may walk with thee as obedient children in the way of thy commandments, and, at last, be presented unto thee by Jesus Christ in the spotless robe of his righteousness. Hear us, O Lord, in his name, thy beloved Son, in whom alone thou art well pleased; and grant us so to believe and live, that we may be found of thee in the wedding-garment, and received into thy everlasting kingdom in heaven, for his sake, and through his alone merits, the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION L.

St. Matthew, xxii. 16.

The Pharisees sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, &c.—The Pharisees refused subjection to the Roman government; the Herodians were opposite to them in this point, and their design was to entrap him, let him answer how he would.

Ver. 21. *Render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's.*—This was for the Pharisees, who were against paying tribute to Cæsar, and would please the Herodians.

—*And unto God, the things that are God's.*—This was for the Herodians, who were loose in their notions of religion, and would please the Pharisees. It is remarkable, that, without giving a direct answer to their ques-

tion, he reproved and pleased both, and so avoided the snare they had laid for him.

Let not our Lord's command to pay the tribute pass without notice. If selling and buying uncustomed goods is not a downright breach of it, what is? And as nothing is more common, so there is nothing in which men may more easily discover the unsoundness of their principles, and the rottenness of their hearts. No *reputation* is lost by it, and, therefore, conscience can be quite easy in the matter. The same may be said concerning God's due from us to the poor, and the payment of tithes, which we may very well suppose to be included in the command, to render to God the things that are God's. The heart, too, is not that God's due in the first place? When we are disposed, by the renewal of our wills in Christ Jesus, to render to God his due tribute of veneration and worship, love and obedience, we shall give all the world their due.

Ver. 22. *They marvelled.*—Were struck dumb with admiration of his wisdom.

LECTURE.

THE use I would make of the portion of Scripture which has now been read, is to put you upon searching yourselves in the point of obedience; whether you take Christ for your Lord and Master, receive his commands without disputing or gainsaying, think it your duty and happiness to be governed by him in all things, and are set down in this belief, that, without such a child-like submission to his teaching and authority, he will never own you as his disciples. Lay your hands upon your hearts, bring what you have heard home to yourselves, and apply it closely. Let me take occasion from hence, to desire you would examine with great care and seriousness, as

persons who are concerned for their souls, and would not be deceived with respect to them for the world. Examine, I say, into the sincerity of your disposition to learn of Christ, and the truth of your obedience to God.

In the two instances here mentioned, of "rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," that is, neither defrauding the public in selling or buying uncustomed goods, nor robbing God of what you know is his due from you to the poor or his ministers, you may probably have made light of your obedience, and cast Christ's commands behind your backs.

The generality of professing Christians do this without scruple, which shows but too plainly how little they are governed by the fear of God, or any true principles of religion. But remember that Christ will let none of his words fall to the ground; neither will you, if you are Christians. He says plainly and positively, that "whoever shall break one of the least of his commandments"—not that any of them are little in themselves; but as we are foolishly and wickedly apt to think—"and shall teach men so"—directly, and by declaring and avowing his contempt of them—"shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"—shall never enter into it.

But what I would put you upon considering more especially from the passage of Scripture now before us, and the observations I have made upon it, is, how your obedience stands in all other cases, and with regard to the general purpose and intention of your hearts. Do you say to Christ, "Master, tell me, teach me," with a sincere design to hear and practise what he tells you? Is it a settled rule with you to say upon all occasions, and with respect to every command, this is Christ's teaching, and I must, and will, through grace, be directed by him? If I live in the breach of his commands, or make a light

matter of any of them, I know it is disclaiming my interest in him, and that he will be no Saviour to me. Thus we should purpose, say, and do. Indeed, my brethren, this, and nothing but this, is being Christ's disciples. When the Herodians and Pharisees brought him a piece of money, he said unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?" In like manner, when we hear any of the commands of God, Thou shalt do this, Thou shalt not do that, if we are faithful and obedient followers of our Lord, we shall say to ourselves, Whose is this image and superscription? Whose image does this command bear? Whose authority is it stamped with? With nothing less than the authority of the most high God; who certainly commands on purpose that he may be obeyed, and whom our Saviour advises us to fear, because his punishment is not, like that of earthly powers, only in this world, but "because he can destroy both body and soul in hell." And if we consider farther, that all his commands are for our own good, and for the good of the world, and that we cannot break one of them without doing mischief to ourselves or others; if we consider with how great a price Christ has bought us to his service, and how earnestly he requires us to show our love to him, by keeping his commandments; we shall put ourselves once for all in the way of obedience, and pray constantly and sincerely to God to write all his laws in our hearts. Oh! what thanks do we owe him for the mercy of our redemption! What obligations are we under to live unto him that died for us! How happy should we be, if that voice, which came from heaven, was deeply imprinted, and always ruling in our hearts, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him!" The believer does hear him, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ, and making his obedience a free-will offering to God for Christ's sake; whatever he does, doing it heartily, as unto the Lord, and

making it his great request to God, to be faithful to the Master who bought him with his blood.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, just and holy, our Maker, Preserver, Governor, and Judge; strike into our souls such a lively awe of thy dread presence, sovereignty, and purity, that we may fear nothing so much as to offend thee, desire nothing so much as to please thee, and be disposed in all things to obey thy blessed will. We are bound to thank thee for commanding us to consult the good of others, and the peace of our own lives; we are bound to thank thee for restraining us from doing mischief to others, and hurting ourselves; and more especially are we bound to thank thee for striking at the root of all evil in us, and laying thy command upon our hearts. For out of them are the issues of life; all our sin proceeds from that corrupt fountain; there thou lookest for the good or evil that is in us; and whatever we do is neither acceptable to thee, nor comfortable to ourselves, unless we do it heartily as unto thee, for the command's sake, for conscience sake, for Christ's sake, and with a pure desire to please thee. But, O Lord, seeing that of ourselves we can do nothing, help us with thy grace to be sincere with thee, our God, by faithfully endeavouring to keep thy commandments; that being renewed to holiness in the inner man, we may be found of thee in peace, and received to the reward of that perfect righteousness, which is treasured up for us in Jesus Christ, and given to all who come unto thee by him, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION LI.

St. Matthew, xxii. 29.

Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.—Worldly minds, more disposed to cavil than believe, cannot know them; they must, of all necessity, pervert them.—Our Lord's inference is plain; if you would not err, you must know them. And all who read them in simplicity, and with an honest heart, to know the will of God that they may do it, *shall* know them. They are able to make all wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Jesus, being God's gift to men for this end; and not to know them, is to put out our own eyes. If you had a deed of gift, though but of a small property, which depended upon your knowing what was contained in it, what would you do?

—*Nor the power of God*—Fully manifested in Scripture.

Ver. 32. *I am the God of Abraham*, &c.—Not for this world, chiefly. He is the God of the faithful for better things. It is their glory and distinction to believe in him for them; and as they do this, upon the warrant of his word and promise, he cannot deceive them.

—*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*—Alive after death, as to their souls. But the soul is not the man. The conclusion, therefore, is certain, that the body must be raised to make the perfect man which God created.

LECTURE.

The Sadducees, we are told, held that there is no resurrection, or life after this; and one of their cavils, as

we learn from this passage of Scripture, was, that they could not conceive, in the case of a woman having several husbands, how she could be the wife of them all after death; grossly supposing, that if there was a resurrection, all things would continue the same in a future state as they are now; and that we should have the same bodies, passions, appetites, and enjoyments, that we now have. And, therefore, when they came to Christ with their puzzling question, as they thought, about the woman and her seven husbands, he showed them their mistake in taking it for granted that there would be marriages in heaven; and also gave them a proof of the resurrection from one of the books of Moses, which was the only part of Scripture they admitted, having first pointed out to them the cause of their unbelief in these words, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

I would speak a word to you upon this; I beseech you, let us take notice of it. Why are we generally so regardless of our future, everlasting concerns? Why are we so bowed down to the earth, and live only for the world? Why do we not understand and consider in what respect God is our God, and for what we are chiefly to believe in him? Why are we not more convinced of the necessity of caring for the soul; and why are any of us at a loss to know what we must do to be saved? Our Lord here leads us to the root of all our wretched carelessness, mistakes, and unbelief, as well as he did the Sadducees. Take heed, therefore, that the words are not spoken to and of you—"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." If you studied to know the Scripture, resolved to walk in the light of it, took it for the guide of your hearts and consciences, and regarded every word of it as you would a voice immediately spoken to you from heaven, it would give a new turn to your judgments, thoughts, and desires; it would teach you to

know God and yourselves, and to believe in God for better things than you can have here; it would set you in the way of happiness, persuade you to make this life a preparation for a better, and guide you in every step of it. If it is the light which God has in mercy put into your hands for these purposes, what can you think of yourselves in the neglect of it? And what can be the consequence of your not knowing it, but darkness, perpetual error, and dead carelessness in the things which belong to your everlasting peace? If it is eternal life, the beginning of it, the way to it, the assurance of it, to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," where shall we find this knowledge? How can we attain to this life, but by direction from God himself, as revealed to us in the book of Scripture? We are naturally in a state of great ignorance of God and divine things, too apt to say with the Sadducees, and too generally live, in the spite of warning and instruction from God, as if we thought as they did, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." My brethren, there is but one remedy for all this; know the Scriptures, that you may know your God; know your Saviour; know yourselves; know your danger; know the worth of your souls; know what hopes you are born to, and how to secure them: I say again, if you would not live and die in error, know the Scriptures. Begin your inquiry into these things where St. Matthew begins his Gospel, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Take occasion from hence, to ask yourselves what sin is; and think how great the misery of our condition in sin must be, when we could be saved from it by no other way or means than the incarnation and death of the Son of God. Follow him from one chapter to another with close attention; and mark diligently, as you go along, what he

has done for the assurance of your faith, and to raise you to a cheerful trust and confidence in him as your Saviour and almighty Helper. Make the proper use and application of every miracle of healing which he wrought on the bodies of men, and say to yourselves, This is for me; I am sick of a deadly distemper, and want healing for my soul. His miracles were great mercies to those whom he cured; but they are greater to me, if they are so understood and believed as to bring me to him for his salvation, for the pardon of my sins, for a clean heart and a right spirit, and for my acceptance with God, and to fix me in a state of diligent preparation for eternity.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who showest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; send down thy Holy Spirit to illuminate and quicken us, and to groan within us for the blessings of thy children. Let thy word be precious to our souls, and the devout study of it the constant employment of our lives, that we may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. To know thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in his salvation, is eternal life. Thou who sparedst not thy own Son, but didst deliver him up for us all, and wilt also freely with him give us all things; give us, we beseech thee, a lively faith in this thy mercy, and, together with it, obedient wills and pure hearts. Sanctify and bless us, and accept us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION LII.

St. Matthew, xxii. 35.

A lawyer—Not in our sense of the word; but one supposing himself well skilled in the law of Moses, and all Scripture, and qualified to be a teacher of it.

—*Tempting him*—With design to sound him as to his knowledge and principles.

Ver. 38, 39. *This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it*, &c.—Love of God with all the heart, &c., and of our neighbour with such a sanctified love as we should love ourselves, is our duty and happiness; we were made for it, are in an unnatural, perverted state in the want of it, and must have it restored to us. Now be a sincere man, and confess that thou hast lost this paradise. When thou knowest it, and findest there is no help in thyself, thou wilt be in pain to know how to regain it. The Bible tells thee, by faith in the pardoning love of God in Christ, warming thy heart with gratitude and love to him, and charity to mankind, for his sake. This is your light from heaven, the point in which all the rays of Scripture meet, and the heart of God opened to us for our renewal to a state of unfeigned regard to the two great commandments. I pray God we may all be supported continually with the thought, that we are travelling under the guidance of the Spirit to the region of perfect love.

Ver. 40. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*—It is the great end of them to establish these duties; and, if we are not convinced of the necessity of them, and aiming at them in sincerity, and with a perfect heart, all Scripture is lost upon us.

—*What think ye of Christ?* &c.—He now in his turn

proposes a question to them, to convince them of their ignorance of Scripture, and withal to open a way for their acknowledgment of him as the Christ, David's Son, and yet his and their Lord.

Ver. 43. *How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?* —Is he only David's Lord? And can any call him Lord but in and by the Spirit, as David did?

Ver. 44. *Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*—He is only so far our Lord, as we believe in him for salvation, and go to him for help to subdue our sins, his and our greatest enemies.

Ver. 46. *And no man was able to answer him a word.*—Now, therefore, O Lord, let this be the effect of our reading, that we may never again answer thee a word; that when thou makest inquiry for sin, we may confess the charge that is against us; when thou offerest to help our infirmities, and give rest to our souls, we may gladly receive thee as our Peace-maker; when thou teachest, we may submit to thy infallible wisdom; when thou commandest, we may obey from the heart.

LECTURE.

I WOULD once more remind you of those words, "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." Hear and reverence your Lord. Let this thought be uppermost in our minds, and always ruling in our hearts; that as he has an absolute right to govern us, perfect wisdom to direct us, loves us with entire affection, and commands nothing but what he knows to be for our good; so it is both our duty and interest, what he earnestly requires of us

as the proof of our faith in him, and the only return we can make him for all his benefits, to submit to his teaching, and receive all his instructions, with the simplicity of little children. For if we make any reserve in our obedience, if we suppose any of his commands may be dispensed with, any that he reminds us of, or recommends to us, may be disregarded, if in any one point, though it seem ever so trifling to us, we set up our own wills or fancies against his wisdom and authority; in so doing we put ourselves in his place, we become our own masters, we prescribe a law to him instead of receiving one from him, and cannot be entitled to the name and reward of his disciples. He, therefore, is the Christian, the man after Christ's own heart, the happy man, if there is one upon earth, who takes the whole yoke of Christ upon him, and makes it the great aim and steady purpose of his life, to fashion himself in every thing by the rule he has set before him.

But if we are thus under a law to Christ, and if we would be his friends and servants, we must account nothing small or insignificant which he requires of us; and, certainly, we are bound in the highest degree to the observation of what he tells us is the first and great commandment, "the love of God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength." Do you ever ask yourselves what it is, what it is founded upon, and whether it is the mark you are aiming at? We know very well what we mean by the word *love* in other cases, what it is to love any thing else, how far we desire it, and what we are doing to get and keep possession of it. And especially, if there is any one to whom we are greatly obliged, whose friendship we esteem, and on whom our well-being depends, we are affected with a sense of his kindnesses, find them to be the kindling of our love to him, dread the loss of his favour, and should think ourselves utterly inexcusable if

we did not study to please him. Try your love of God by this rule. As we do not see him with our bodily eyes, we cannot well have the same passionate feeling of a sensible love to him, which we have for some other things, husband, wife, or child; but, nevertheless, we may have what perhaps is the best and truest love of the God and Father of our spirits; we may perceive him ruling in our minds; we may keep up a steady, prevailing regard to him in all we do, and he may be dearer to us than all the world. He is, when we are ready to forego any advantage, and deny ourselves any earthly pleasure, rather than disobey him.

If you have this proof to give of your love of God, that you love him in his will, truly desire to please him, are never so unhappy as when you do any thing to offend him, and grieve for nothing so much as your coming short of that perfect obedience which he requires of you, you may set your hearts at ease; the love of God bears sway in you, and you have Christ's own words for your comfort and assurance in the case, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And if you so love God as to do whatever he commands, and because he commands it, you cannot be at a loss to know upon what ground you do it. It is because you have some suitable apprehension of his goodness; but more especially, and above all, of his love to mankind in Christ Jesus. "We love God," says St. John, "because he first loved us," when we believe, and understand with the heart, that God gave his only begotten Son to die for us; that in him we are justified, accepted, beloved; that he bore our sins in his own body on the cross, and that they will never rise up against us to condemnation; we have such a powerful call in this manifestation of his goodness to love him again, and such a prevailing reason for it, as we cannot well resist. See,

therefore, on what ground chiefly the love of God is to be built, and how it takes possession of us. We have great cause, on many accounts, to admire and adore his excellencies and perfections. Our lives, and the support of them, the sun that shines upon us, the rain that waters our fields, the air we breathe, the bread we eat, every thing about us and belonging to us, proclaim his goodness, and demand our highest gratitude. But Scripture knowledge goes beyond all this, and Christian faith shows him to us in a still more amiable light; and if the discovery he has made to us, of his grace and goodness in the wonderful manner of our redemption, does not incline us to love him, to seek his favour, to value his peace, and inspire us with a resolution to keep it, by a sincere endeavour to please him in obedience, we must not pretend that we believe in him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me, therefore, remind you of the question here put to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" Is he your Saviour in his blood? And is not this a mighty argument of his love to you, and a strong reason why you should take him for your Master too, thank God for his teaching, treasure up his words in your hearts and memories, and be always improving under him in that love of God which is your perfection and happiness?

But is there not also another commandment, like unto the first, great in its obligation, springing from the same root of faith, and only differing in its object? Yes, the love of our neighbour; which, when it flows from the love of God, and is our tribute of gratitude to him, becomes divine, and is a far more noble principle of action than any degree of natural instinct or humanity. And when we know that God requires it of us, as the expression of our love to him, and has in some measure made over the love we owe him to mankind, as to the outward exercise of it, we shall think it our great distinction as

Christians to abound in love to one another; and, according to our abilities and opportunities, show it, by all proper acts of kindness, godlike pity, and real help, to every soul of man, for God's sake.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we pray thee send down thy Spirit to kindle the holy fire of love in our hearts. Let the sense of thy excellencies and perfections, various gifts, and blessings, be always present to our minds, and the continual subject of our meditations, that we may adore, and bless, and imitate thee. The heavens declare thy glory, the earth is filled with thy bounties, and wherever we turn our eyes, we see thee in the riches of thy goodness. But thou hast more especially manifested thy love to mankind, and magnified thy name and thy glory, by giving thy only begotten Son to die for us. Give us, we beseech thee, such a true knowledge of thee, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and such an assured faith in thy great mercy to us in him, that we may love thee, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us, and all mankind for thy sake; do all our works on this ground; and be accepted of thee for the sake, and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION LIII.

St. Matthew, xxiii. 1.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude.— All being concerned in what he had to say of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Ver. 2. *Sit in Moses' seat.*—He does not deny them to be authorized teachers, and expounders of the law.

Ver. 3. *All, therefore,* &c.—Not with respect to their

traditions; for he tolerated his disciples in the neglect of some of them, if he did not enjoin it (chap. xv.); but with respect to the more substantial and unquestionable matters of duty.

Ver. 3. *That observe and do.*—Make the right use of this for yourselves. If the command is God's, receive it as such, notwithstanding the ill example of the teacher.

—*Do not ye after their works*—Whereinsoever they transgress any of the commandments.

—*For they say, and do not*—What they should do, or think they do, to be just in the sight of God. Notwithstanding a show of strictness in some things, their practice was corrupt, and their hearts more so.

Ver. 4. *For they bind heavy burdens,* &c.—What were these heavy burdens? Not their traditions. It is true, they would not give the people any ease or relaxation from them, and were scrupulous observers of them themselves. But it will appear throughout this chapter, that the controversy which Christ had with them, was concerning weightier matters. Not the moral law; for they could not carry it to a greater height, nor require a more punctual obedience to it, than he himself did. The difference, therefore, betwixt them was, they bound the law, together with their traditions, upon men for salvation, and tied them strictly up to a *covenant of works.* This it was which made *their* burden heavy, as St. Peter plainly tells us, Acts, xv. 10; and was, in effect, pronouncing their own damnation, as they came short of it. Whereas Christ, without diminishing from the obligation of the law, has both removed the burden of it as a *covenant,* and made the observation of it as a *rule* more easy.

—*But they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*—To make them lighter; neither coming themselves nor suffering others to come to Christ, the

Reliever of our burdens, and the true rest of our souls; chap. xi. 28—30. It is, therefore, no wonder, that they would not move the burden with one of their fingers, in another sense—that is, of doing what they imposed upon others; that some of them were corrupt in their lives; and others, whatever they pretended, or however they appeared to men, were sadly defective in the sight of God, as to any pure and perfect obedience of the heart; Gal. vi. 13. And this our Lord, who knew what was in man, has here fully laid open, for the conviction of all such unbelieving, self-righteous hypocrites.

Ver. 5. *But all their works they do, for to be seen of men.*—The meaning is, not that they directly proposed this mean end to themselves, but that it lay close at the root of all they did, whether they knew it or not. And I suppose that Christ is here chiefly taking the veil from their hearts; yea, and from ours too. This one thing, of having an eye to men, it is to be feared, will wipe a great part of the good that is done in the world out of God's book; for nothing is good but as it is done to *him*. Lord, search us with this word, and send us to our hearts, that we may know whether thou rulest there; and that the good we do may not be found evil, by proceeding from base motives; nor expose us to a greater condemnation, by inflaming our pride.

—*They make broad their phylacteries*—That is, *preservatives;* as memorials of their duty, and to keep them from transgression. These were pieces of parchment, with the ten commandments, or other sentences of the law written upon them, which they bound upon their wrists and foreheads; and it does not appear that they were so commanded; Ex. xiii. xvi. xix.; Deut. vi. viii. xi. xviii. The borders, or fringes in their garments, were; Num. xv. 38. And they exceeded in both, mistaking the letter for the spirit. Now, it is plain that these, and a

hundred such things, were no burdens, but an easy substitute for deadness to the world, an humble heart, and a clean conscience.

Ver. 6, 7. *And loved the uppermost rooms,* &c.—Doubtless they sat down in the highest room with a strained courtesy, and not in an open, bare-faced manner; for this would have lost them the esteem they sought after. Observe Christ's word; he says they *loved* distinction and titles. O the heart! there *he* looks, and there he aims his blow.

Ver. 8. *But be not ye called Rabbi*—To look great in your own eyes, as thinking the title of master your due.

—*For one is your Master, even Christ.*—He is so in reality, and he only is worthy of the name.

—*And all ye are brethren.*—If we do not learn this of him, we learn nothing.

Ver. 9. *And call no man your father upon earth*—To submit your understandings to him; for this is God's prerogative.

Ver. 10. *Neither be ye called masters.*—Observe the repetition. Christ knows the pride of our natures, and how deeply it is rooted in them, and, therefore, speaks to the point a second time.

Ver. 11. *But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant*—Account no otherwise of himself than as an instrument, in the hand of God, to promote his glory, and stoop to all for the good of all.

Ver. 12. *And whosoever shall exalt himself*—Lies horribly to God and himself, is as low in God's esteem as he is high in his own, and shall find it to his cost.

—*And he that shall humble himself,* &c.—Dwells in the truth. Lord, help here! Though we are dust and ashes, and our all is sin and misery, thou knowest we are not sufficiently humble. It is hard work to bring down

our pride; but nothing is impossible with thee, and great as this mountain is, thou canst remove it.

Ver. 13. *But wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men,* &c. — Christ's kingdom of grace and help; by a false conceit of a righteousness of their own, and ability to attain it, which they had not. There are many degrees of hypocrisy, or hypocrites; but they are the most dangerous, and most effectually shut the kingdom of heaven against themselves and others, who think they can do what they cannot, and do what they do not.

— *Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in.* — This is as true of those who talk of the moral sense, beauty of virtue, and fitness of things, as sufficiently evident, and sufficient guides to mankind; which is nothing but speculative unbelief: and, though some are not aware of it, it is, in fact, pleaded by others as the ground of their opposition to the Gospel.

Ver. 14. *Devour widows' houses.* — No kind of oppression was too great for them. And yet, doubtless, they, who were so scrupulous in paying tithes of the smallest things, condemned, and pretended to abhor, all manner of injustice and oppression.

Ver. 15. *Ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.* — Nothing is more common than for converts to be over-zealous in their new way; and if it is bad, doubly bad.

Ver. 16—22. *Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing,* &c. — Perhaps the manner of swearing by other things rather than God, was introduced out of a too superstitious reverence for his name. Our Saviour's decision is, that such distinctions are frivolous; and that all oaths, as such, are binding, as carrying in them an appeal to God.

LECTURE.

In speaking to this passage of Scripture, I have told you what I suppose is to be understood by the Pharisees "binding heavy burdens upon the people, and not "touching them with one of their fingers," that is, to make them lighter. It could not be their requiring of them strict conformity to the moral law; for they had no power to allow of less than was commanded, and would have been answerable to God for their presumption in so doing; neither could they carry the point of obedience beyond what Christ himself did in his sermon on the mount, and especially where he says, "till "heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no "wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." If it was their traditions, as many expositors say, it is true they had invented a great many things over and above what was prescribed in the law of Moses, which they strictly observed themselves, and as rigorously bound upon others. But then it cannot be supposed that our Lord, who, as it appears from other places of Scripture, did not approve of their traditions, would have said concerning *them*, "all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, "that observe and do;" for this would have been binding the same burden upon men's shoulders, doing himself what he blamed in the Pharisees, and confirming it by his authority. One thing I told you there was, in the doctrine of the Pharisees, which was a heavy burden indeed, and a galling yoke upon themselves, and upon the necks of mankind, who are always fond of the notion, how defective soever they may be in their practice, namely, their teaching and insisting upon obedience, or a law-work, for life. You will say at once, Must we not obey? Can any attain to life, or be saved, without obedience?

Does not all Scripture require it? Does not Christ himself carry it to the highest degree of perfection? Does he not say plainly, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the "commandments?" Yes; but the mistake lies, and a fatal one it is, in making our obedience the ground, or meritorious cause of salvation; as if we could present it to God without any imperfection, or spot of sin, and challenge the reward of it at his hands. This then was their great error; I will venture to say it is the bane of all teaching and preaching, and one or two questions will set you right in the point. Why did Christ die for the sin of the world? Why is faith, in his sacrifice, required of us in order to salvation, if we are to look only in ourselves for the ground of it, and might boldly plead our own obedience before God, for our eternal justification? But let us never be so foolish as to bind this burden upon ourselves, I mean, of working for life; for no man upon earth was ever able to bear it, if you will believe St. Peter, Acts, xv. 10; and the attempt is as impossible, as it is ruinous to the soul. It is robbing Christ of his glorious, beloved name Jesus, and taking it to ourselves. It is the very strength of unbelief, and coming before God with a lie in our mouths, unless our obedience was perfect in the strict sense of the word. And, therefore, Jesus, who was so meek and lowly in heart, who received all that came to him with so much condescension, spoke to them with such tenderness, and had such comfort for perishing sinners, in this chapter, and elsewhere, reproves the Pharisees with great sharpness and severity; knowing how contrary their doctrine was to the great design of his coming into the world, and to the wants of his creatures; and because they said and did not; pretended to a great deal more than they made good, and set such an unreasonable value upon their works, as to make them the price of their salvation.

Do you, dearly beloved, learn to know yourselves better; know your corruption and weakness; believe the Scripture; understand the meaning of the word *redemption,* and how deliverance comes to you; abhor the doctrine which would make you your own saviours; let God be true, and every man a liar. Methinks you have now a proper occasion to consider what Christ has done to make your burden light, and to call to mind those sweet words of his, "come unto me, all ye that labour and are "heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ's rest is God's peace, pardon to the sinner, mercy to the guilty, a covenant of life to the dead, blessing and comfort showered down from heaven, as freely as the rain comes upon our fields; and the Christian, who knows his want of the gift, how unspeakably great it is in itself, and how dearly it was purchased for him, receives it thankfully as such, makes it his happiness, rejoices in it before God, and does all his works in the belief of it; not to trust in them for life, not to make them the rest and stay of his soul, and the ground of his everlasting hopes, but in love to Christ, with freedom of spirit, and to show that he has obtained mercy. He knows and feels his obligations to the Saviour, calls him Master and Lord in truth and sincerity, resigns himself to his teaching only, grieves for nothing so much as that he is not more lively in his obedience, and stands continually before God, with this prayer in his heart, Thy will be done.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who resistest the proud, and givest grace unto the humble, make us to know and feel in the depth of our hearts, that we are sinful dust and ashes. Convince us that we are as blind and weak, as we are corrupt; that, being enlightened by thy word and Spirit, we may cry to thee for mercy, be revived with the hope of

forgiveness, and enabled by the mighty power of thy grace to purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Blessed be thou, O God, for the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace, and for thy covenant of life in Jesus Christ. Grant that we may make it the rest of our souls, glory only in the cross of Christ, and receive him with all humility and thankfulness as the Lord our righteousness. Deliver us from the false teaching of others, and from that pride in ourselves, which would make us our own saviours. Oh! take the veil from every heart, that, being as naked and open to ourselves as we are to thee, and meekly acknowledging our vileness, we may take the Lord Jesus Christ for our Teacher and Master, be washed clean from all spot of sin in his blood, and quickened by his Spirit, live unto him by his rule, and be accepted for his sake, our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION LIV.

St. Matthew, xxiii. 23.

Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted, &c. — Is it possible that they, who were so scrupulous in paying tithes of the smallest trifles, should be chargeable with this guilt? It is well, if many of us do not thus deceive ourselves by a compliance with the outward part of religion, when the inward is neglected; or an exact observation of some commands, which do not much thwart our humour, or interest, when we are sadly defective in the weightier matters of justice and mercy to men, and faith in, or faithfulness to God.

Ver. 23. *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* — Happy is the man, who has a regard to

all his duty; and neither makes one part of it a pretence for overlooking another, nor thinks any thing little which God has commanded.

Ver. 24. *Ye blind guides, which strain at (out) a gnat, and swallow a camel.* — Nice in small matters, when hardly any sin was too great for them. Grievous as this charge may seem, probably you may find it to be your own case, if you will abide by the Scripture estimate of sin. To mention only one instance. Love of God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength, is the first and great commandment. Now, what can it signify that your life is exact and well ordered in other respects, if you make no conscience of this great duty, and can swallow the great sin of not loving God?

Ver. 25. *Ye make clean the outside of the cup,* &c. — This is to be understood of the outside and the inside of the *man.*

Ver. 26. *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within,* &c. — Observe this upon the peril of your souls. This is Christ's order, and in *his* method we shall go on successfully with our work. We lose all by inverting it; and are never so blind, and so foul inwardly, as when we deceive the world and ourselves with an outward washing.

O Jesus, do thou cleanse that which is within, with thy word, thy blood, thy Spirit. For till thou dost, we are all filthy and polluted; and thou, therefore, camest into the world, that we might know and abhor the evil that is in us, and by thee be presented to God with pure and clean hearts.

Ver. 27. *Ye are like unto whited sepulchres.* — Would the sight and stench of a corpse, putrefying in the grave, offend thee? Thou art the man, and just so abominable to God, when thou hast begun thy work at the wrong end, and covered up a rotten inside with a beautiful

appearance; it may be, very beautiful; civility, prayers, alms-deeds, and what not.

Ver. 28. *Even so ye also outwardly*, &c.—If this does not put us upon examining ourselves, we are in great danger of being the persons here described.

Ver. 29. *Ye build the tombs of the prophets*, &c.—What could be more plausible than their building and adorning the tombs of the prophets, professing an abhorrence of the sin of their fathers in putting them to death, and doing all they could to wash their hands of their blood? Will nothing do with the deep-searching Jesus, but the correspondent sincerity of the inner man? No; he has a heavier charge than ever to bring against them, grounded on this very circumstance of their owning themselves to be the descendants of such ancestors.

Ver. 31. *Wherefore, ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children*, &c.—They owned they were their children; and he tells them they were truly so in all respects, whether they would own it or not, of the very same nature, and altogether as blood-thirsty; which they soon proved, by crucifying Christ, and persecuting his followers.

Ver. 32. *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers*—They would; nothing could prevent it; he gives them up to their desert. We learn from hence that the sins of the fathers and the children, both together, go to fill up a certain measure, known to God; and that when it is filled up, destruction is at hand. This was then the unhappy case of the Jews; and no age or nation can be sure it will not be their own, but by not adding their sins to those of their forefathers.

Ver. 33. *How can ye escape the damnation of hell?*—Then it is plain that their sufferings in this world would be no discharge from the much greater sufferings of the next. And what we have to consider for ourselves is,

whether God is not the same, and sin the same now that they were then.

Ver. 34. *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes*—Hear this. Bless God that he has sent them to *you;* and let this be your ruling thought and fixed persuasion, that if you would be truly wise, you must turn out all your own wisdom, and submit as babes to their teaching.

—*And some of them ye shall kill,* &c.—You have them not to kill, and think verily you would not have done it. But there is no way to be sure of this, but by showing a sincere regard to their writings. For they are true disciples of Christ; break open the rotten sepulchre of the heart; call loudly for its cleansing, and give no more allowance to a smooth outside than *he* did; and what they say after him is very grating to human nature, and will either amend or provoke its graceless passions. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Scribes and Pharisees were such monsters of wickedness, as never appeared but once in the world. You would be amazed to hear of their great strictness in many respects; and yet trusting in themselves, and having not the Spirit, they were the men here described. And why is their character here given, but that they may stand as representatives of all mankind in the same circumstances, especially in the point of *persecution,* which is not the sin of the worst of men only, but hardly ever to be rooted out of our natures?

Ver. 35. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood,* &c.—As if, with their blood-thirsty disposition, they had a hand in all the righteous blood that was shed from the beginning of the world. This is a great mystery. We must confess that the justice of God is an unknown depth, and not to be fathomed by our line.

Ver. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,* &c.—The expression is affecting, and the similitude as lively an image

as all nature can afford, of his tenderness and love for that devoted city and people. He calls to them; his bowels yearn for them; he mourns over them; but if they will not hear, if they will not be gathered under his wings, mark it well, he cannot save them. Sinner, he speaks to thee and to me. Oh! that I had his compassionate heart for thee, and thou hadst a true feeling of it for thyself!

Ver. 38. *Behold, your house* (the temple) *is left unto you desolate.*—The great inhabitant had left it, and its destruction was inevitable. We hear our own doom, in worse than temporal judgments, whenever we forsake *him.* Never delude yourselves with a confused hope of mercy, in an impenitent state, till you can blot this passage out of Scripture.

Ver. 39. *For, I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth,* &c.—Though they rejected him then, the time will come for the general conversion of their nation to the faith of Christ; which he here foretels, and is the subject of many prophecies. Now is the time of his coming to *us,* which only can be witnessed by our unfeigned faith in him, and acceptance of him for salvation. Lord, grant we may rejoice in it, fly to thee as a sanctuary from the guilt of sin, and the purifier of our hearts, and say, from our own happy experience, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

LECTURE.

In this chapter our Lord directs us neither to call any man upon earth Father, so as, like children, to submit wholly to his wisdom, nor to affect the name of Master ourselves; to the end that our affections may be supremely fixed upon God, and his authority only acknowledged, and that we may resign our wills and understandings to

the infallible Teacher. Who then is that master and teacher worthy of the name, and perfectly qualified for the office? The answer is here in the book, and you know very well it is Christ. But do your hearts give in the same answer? Does Christ rule there with sovereign authority, and do you take him for your guide to heaven and happiness? Just in proportion as you think of heaven as your happiness, and desire to be put in the way to it. For if you do not learn this lesson of him, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, you will slight all his other instructions, be your own masters, and go on blindfold all your lives in the way of your own wills. Consider, therefore, what you are doing in the world, and whether it is the great wish of your hearts to be at peace with God, and alive unto God, that you may go to heaven when you die. If it is, you will go to Christ for direction, study his word, bind it upon your consciences, and make it the law of your inward parts. When you hear him condemning all manner of vain oaths, you will carry on your thoughts to the spiritual meaning, and learn of him to reverence the Lord God in your hearts. When you think who he is, and what right he has to be your Master, that he comes to you with almighty love in his heart, and the light of heaven in his hand; if you are in earnest with him, and truly concerned for yourselves, you will hardly be able to go to sleep, without looking into his word, to know what he has done for you; what he has delivered to you in the name of God; what commands he has laid upon you; and what counsel he has given you for the salvation of your immortal souls. And, particularly, when you hear him, throughout this chapter, censuring the Scribes and Pharisees with such severity of expression, you will ask yourselves, and endeavour to know what it was in their doctrine and practice that was so offensive to him. Strict

in trifles, and outwardly saint-like, they were foul within, and wretchedly ignorant of themselves; they neither understood the law in its whole extent, nor laid the rule of it to their hearts, and at the same time were so grossly conceited of their own works, as to depend upon them for their admission into heaven. So will you; so do all till they call Christ Master, who prescribe a law to themselves, and, short as their obedience is, think no reward too great for it.

Let this chapter, therefore, be the touchstone of every heart. The Pharisee lies deep within us, and a decent outside is for the most part the sum total of our righteousness. But Christ has a piercing eye, and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be put off with a form. In what then does he differ from other teachers? If he is so strict in his exposition of the law, requires such exact conformity to it, and comes so close to the heart with it, in what respect is he the Reliever of our burdens, and what shall we gain by taking him for our Master? All we want, or can desire. We shall learn of him to know God and ourselves; we shall know what sin is, what we are in sin, and how we are delivered from the curse of it; our wills will be in consent and agreement with the law of God, and we shall find the yoke of Christ made easy to us, by being reconciled in heart and affection to the whole and every part of it, both in its outward and inward meaning.

We are now coming near to the conclusion of this blessed Gospel, and shall soon hear of Christ's dying upon the cross, to purge our sins, to bear our punishment, and to finish the work which the Father gave him to do, that he might be the Lord our righteousness. Is this no ease to the guilty conscience, no rest to the troubled mind? If we had been left to deal with the law, and make our peace with God as well as we could, we

should have done just as the Pharisees did, shortened the rule of our duty, made a false reckoning of our own righteousness, and thought of nothing but forcing our way into heaven with it. But Christ, our Master, will teach us to know the purity of God, the strictness of his law, and our own miserable unworthiness better. He will carry us into the depth of our hearts, find sin in all we do, and convince us of it to our faces; not merely to upbraid us with it; not to leave us to perish in it; not to put us upon the impossible task of cleansing ourselves from it; but to make us sensible of the evil of sin and the greatness of our guilt, that in the peril of our souls we may cast our burden upon him, who alone could bear it, live by his death, and rejoice in his salvation. See now and consider this great thing which the Lord hath done for you. Come to him in self-knowledge, receive the mercy of a Saviour with the penitence and humility of an undone sinner, with a deep sense of your misery, and of the greatness of his love in your deliverance, and, my life for it, you will look for another blessing at his hands. You will gladly submit to his teaching in all things, long to be delivered from the corruption of an evil nature, beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to come into you as a refiner's fire to burn and consume all your open and secret iniquities, and pray daily to be faithful to him in obedience, that, as the disciples of a crucified Lord, you may deny yourselves, wait in faith and holiness for his coming, and enter into his kingdom of everlasting rest.

PRAYER.

Holy Father, open our eyes, we beseech thee, to see the danger and misery of our condition in sin. Let thy Son be our Master to teach us the strictness and purity of thy law; let thy Spirit go with us into the depth of our hearts, to convince us of our transgressions of it; that

we may fly to the mercy of the Gospel, be revived with a sense of forgiveness, live unto him that died for us, and do all our works from a holy principle of faith and love to thee. Deliver us from all guile and hypocrisy, from all blindness and hardness of heart; and as we know the Lord Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, grant that we may humbly and thankfully receive him in the grace and power of all his offices. Oh! grant, for thy mercy's sake, that as he is the only rest of our guilty consciences, the Reliever of all our burdens, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, we may rejoice in his salvation, be faithful to his truth, commit our souls to him to be guided in the way which leadeth to everlasting life, and be received into thy kingdom of glory, through him, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Amen.

SECTION LV.

St. Matthew, xxiv. 1.

His disciples came to show him the buildings of the Temple. —They supposed he would be as full of admiration at the beauty and stateliness of it as they were, and confirm them in their opinion of its duration. It was newly rebuilt, and yet near its final destruction. How blind is man in the things of futurity!

Ver. 2. *There shall not be left one stone upon another.*— Which accordingly came to pass about thirty-nine years after, in the most remarkable destruction that ever befel any place or people.

Ver. 3. *Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*— Whatever the disciples understood by these words, Christ

knew how to give them an important meaning, and answers distinctly to the two parts of the question; making the one relate to his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, the other to his coming to judgment. And these, with his help, we will endeavour to distinguish as we go along.

Ver. 4—8. *And Jesus answered*, &c.—We learn from history how exactly the several particulars here mentioned came to pass. See Hammond and Whitby, and especially Bishop Newton.

Ver. 4. *Take heed that no man deceive you.*—This concerned them more, as it does men at all times, than to be curious about knowing what will be hereafter.

Ver. 5. *And shall deceive many*—But not those who have the true Christ by a true faith; they are proof against all imposture; 1 John, ii. 20.

Ver. 6. *See that ye be not troubled.*—Then we need not be troubled, even in the worst of times. And we shall not, if we truly believe that all things work together for good to them that love God. How happy to be in such a state!

—*But the end is not yet*—The final destruction of Jerusalem, and end of the Jewish polity, which he is here speaking of.

Ver. 9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you*—As if *you* were the causes of all the miseries that are coming upon the earth. This was exactly verified in the heathen persecutions.

—*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.*—If thou art a Christian indeed, thou wilt have some of this hard measure even in a Christian country.

Ver. 12. *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*—Many, professing Christ, would be carried away with the general corruption, fall from the

faith, desert and persecute their brethren. These two mutually produce and follow each other; the abounding of iniquity is the extinction of love, and in proportion as love decreases, iniquity abounds.

Ver. 13. *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*—As the Christians were remarkably saved from the common destruction. But it is a warning to men at all times of the necessity of perseverance.

Ver. 14. *And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.*—The preaching of the Gospel in all the world, was then, and for some time after, a mystery to the disciples. But, doubtless, this saying would be remembered by them, and operate in its season for their full conviction in this point. Christ's seed may lie hid for a long time, and spring up at last. Sow it, thou whose concern it is, and leave the event to him.

—*For a testimony unto them*—Of God's will to save them, if they receive it, and of their doom, if they reject it. You have had your call from it; let it not appear as a witness against you.

—*And then shall the end come*—The end spoken of, ver. 6.

Ver. 15. *When, therefore, ye shall see the abomination of desolation*—The desolating Roman army, abominable for its idol standards.

—*Standing in the holy place*—Round about Jerusalem; called the holy city.

—*Whoso readeth, let him understand.*—So, doubtless, he says to us, concerning all Scripture. Not the outward meaning only, but spiritual intent, and saving sense of it. Would you know how? Receive it as the word and will of God for your salvation, and pray it into your hearts. But, my friends, how can those understand who are able to read, and do not?

Ver. 17. *Let him which is on the house top, not come down to take any thing out of his house*—Not having a moment to lose. Their houses were flat-roofed, with stairs on the outside.

Ver. 19. *Wo unto them that are with child,* &c.—As being more incapable than others of saving themselves by flight.

Ver. 20. *Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter*—When they could not fly so fast as would be necessary.

—*Neither on the Sabbath-day*—When they were not allowed to go above two miles from home; meaning, that in such a time of danger it would be necessary to take a much longer journey.

Ver. 21. *For then shall be great tribulation,* &c.—The miseries they underwent during the siege were exceeding great; and Josephus, who was present at it, says, that the number of the slain exceeded all that ever perished either by famine, plague, or sword, in any part of the world.

Ver. 22. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved*—All would be swept away in the common destruction. And those who were preserved from it, would, or might be saved eternally, by having longer time granted them to repent and believe.

—*But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.*—Little does the world think that they are indebted to those whom they hate and persecute, for signal mercies.

Ver. 24. *Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*—The meaning is, that they should not be deceived. And this shows the power of truth in them, and the great blessing of being established in it.

Ver. 27. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, &c. so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be*—That is, general, and for a general destruction. It will be in vain to look out for a deliverer in this or that place.

Ver. 28. *Wheresoever the carcase is,* &c.—Wherever, and whenever, men are dead to God, and finally remain so, destruction will seize them, as the eagles and other birds of prey fly to the carcase.

Ver. 29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days,* &c.—The days of Christ largely taken, and at the conclusion of them, shall the sun be darkened, &c. Just as St. Peter, after the Prophet Joel, under the words, *the last days,* comprehends the whole of Christ's economy, mentioning some remarkable particulars which should characterize the beginning, and others the end of it, Acts, ii. 17—20. His last coming, therefore, is the subject spoken of from this verse to ver. 32, and is plainly distinguished from the destruction of Jerusalem, as being another event, and what was to come to pass *after* it.

—*The sun shall be darkened.*—You may trust Christ for the coming of this time. It was he who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem; and one event is the earnest and proof of the other.

Ver. 30. *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.*—If this sign is something distinct from himself, we cannot pretend to say what it will be.

—*And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn*—All, with fruitless, unavailing sorrow, and heart-rending anguish, who are not prepared for his coming.

Ver. 30. *And they shall see the Son of Man.*—You and I, as surely as we now read this, either with joy or terror unspeakable.

Ver. 31. *And they shall gather together his elect*—Us, if we have chosen the Redeemer, sinners as we are. And chosen to what? God's love, Christ's peace, the Spirit's power; to life, to heaven. Spring forward, heart, to meet the glorious, pleasing hope.

Ver. 33. *When ye shall see all these things.*—From verse the 5th to verse the 30th. For, at verse the 32d,

he returns to the former subject of his coming for the destruction of Jerusalem; as he does again to the latter, of his coming to judgment, at verse the 36th. And these two parts of the chapter, though intermixed, are kept so distinct as to be easily discernible from each other.

Ver. 34. *This generation shall not pass, &c.*—It is plain from hence that he is now speaking of his first coming; which, as it was not above thirty-nine or forty years after, many of that generation might live to the time.

Ver. 35. *Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.*—We know how dreadfully this was fulfilled in the case of the Jews; and in vain do we pretend to believe in Christ, if we can entertain a thought that his words will not be as exactly verified in the other part of the prediction relating to his coming to judgment.

Ver. 36. *But of that day*—Spoken of in and from verse the 30th to verse 32d, and here plainly distinguished by its being called *that day;* that eminent, important day, to which all our other days ought to have a reference, as the lot of all mankind will then be finally determined to happiness or misery. Lord, keep it ever in our minds; and do thou come first in our hearts, that it may be a joyful day to us all.

—*Knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only*—The precise time of Christ's coming to judgment was not unknown to him, but not to be revealed by him, Acts, i. 7. And there will be no such previous warnings of it, as there were of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ver. 37. *But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*—It will find the generality as worldly, as unbelieving, and thoughtless of their eternal state as they were then.

Ver. 38. *For as in the days that were before the flood,*

they were eating, &c. — Given up to earthly, sensual enjoyments, and thinking of nothing else. It is a vain pretence to say that these things are both allowable and necessary. We know it. But it is more necessary to enter into the depth here opened to us. The soul may be, the souls of many are, as dead to God, and all sense of true happiness, in the decent and reputable use of lawful comforts, as in a more profligate course of life.

Ver. 39. *And knew not until*, &c. — Nevertheless, the flood swept them all away. Observe this carefully, that you may not trust to the vain plea of wilful ignorance. It was then, as it is now with too many, in respect of Gospel salvation; they *would* not know; they despised Noah's preaching, and would take no warning.

Ver. 40. *One shall be taken.* — To God.

— *And the other left* — Forsaken of God for ever! We need only weigh the difference to see the wisdom of true godliness.

Ver. 41. *Two women shall be grinding* — Grinding was women's work, viz. with hand-mills.

Ver. 42. *Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come* — Or, which is the same thing, the day and hour of your death. That is the Lord's coming to every individual. But what is watching? Is it being in the faith of Christ, and walking according to his rule? Is it watching unto prayer and Scripture reading, and keeping your eyes steadily fixed upon the end of your lives? Look at yourselves, look all about you. Alas! how few are in such a state of watching!

Ver. 43. *But know this, that if the good man of the house, &c. he would have watched* — So would you, for your bodies, or worldly goods, if you knew they were in danger. It is a melancholy consideration, and what our Lord is here lamenting, that men should be so much less concerned about their precious souls, which they know will

be required of them, and that as the time will certainly come, so it may come before they are aware of it.

Ver. 44. *Therefore, be ye also ready.* — Are you ready? If you are, how, and when did your preparation begin? Or is it still to begin?

Ver. 45—51. *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, &c.* — Mark with what concern he bespeaks our attention to what has been delivered in the chapter, knowing the doom of unfaithful servants, and how earnestly he desires we should all be wise managers of our trust; especially the apostles, and succeeding ministers, to whom the words are more particularly addressed.

Jesus, help us; and hear my prayer for you, and for myself. May he enable me to give you your portion of meat, even his own wholesome words and life-giving truths; and dispose you to receive them in the love thereof, as the nourishment of your souls; that when our Lord cometh, and findeth us so doing, he may pronounce us blessed, and present us to the Father washed in his blood, purified by his Spirit, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

LECTURE.

Belief in Jesus, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, is founded chiefly on the miracles he wrought, as the belief of his miracles is on the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of them, and laid down their lives in confirmation of it. For the conclusion which Nicodemus drew from the miracles of Christ, is evident at once to the reason of mankind, that no man could do them except God was with him; neither can it be supposed that the men, on whose report they rest, were deceived, or deceivers, since they bore witness to

what they saw themselves, endured the most painful labours, suffered the greatest hardships, and willingly offered themselves to death in testimony of what they knew to be truth. And I verily believe that many a soul would have been lost in its doubtings, and shrunk from the difficulties of Christ's religion, if it had not been supported with the evidence of his miracles, and constrained, in spite of all opposition from carnal reasoning or worldly allurements, to submit to the force of it.

But there is one kind of miracles, namely, that of prophecy, in this chapter, which deserves our particular notice, because it is perpetual, and speaks alike to men in every age. The miracles which Christ wrought, during his abode upon earth, were seen and felt only by those who lived at that time; whereas a prophecy of something future, exactly fulfilled, still fulfilling, and always continuing, is a standing perpetual miracle, equally present and visible at all times, and brings the matter home to our senses. Such was his prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews. Every thing came to pass within forty years, exactly as it was here foretold. Their city was besieged and taken by the Romans; those who escaped the slaughter were banished from their country, and they still continue scattered over the world, as so many living witnesses of Christ's divine fore-knowledge in this prophecy against them, proving, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that he was what he declared himself to be, the Son of the living God.

But with the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in this chapter, there is also interwoven a solemn declaration of another coming of the Son of Man, in which we are all concerned, and one is the earnest and proof of the other. For as sure as Jerusalem was destroyed according to Christ's prediction, so surely will the world come to an end, and be followed by the general judgment of mankind;

and that you might be established in this great article of our faith, this portion of Scripture was written, and has now been read. The application of it in Christ's own words is still sounding in your ears, and I pray God it may be imprinted deeply in all our hearts, "watch, therefore,—be ye also ready; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," or, which is the same thing to every individual, the hour of your death. Take heed to yourselves that you do not lie down in your graves with the guilt of sin upon you. And, especially, beware how you entertain any such opinion of the harmlessness of sin, as if God might spare those in whom it is found, and would not give them up to destruction of soul and body. This is a point in which mankind at all times are slow of belief. Notwithstanding the whole tenor of Scripture, and the many plain declarations, warnings, and examples, therein recorded of God's punishment of sin and sinners, they will not believe in him as he has revealed himself, but walk on still in darkness, and fancy him to be all mercy, in opposition to his justice. But take heed, O Christian, lest he also spare not thee, and lest a double portion of wo fall upon thee for the abuse of thy name and profession. For he changeth not, he is the same holy, sin-hating God for ever and ever; and there is a day coming which will be infinitely more dreadful to all the workers of iniquity than his wrath upon Jerusalem, great and terrible as it was. One is a forerunner, example, and proof of the other; the destruction of Jerusalem of the day of judgment*. And, accordingly, as I told you, one

* The public is greatly indebted to Dr. Newton, the late Lord Bishop of Bristol, for his excellent dissertations on those particular prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world; in which he has stated the argument in favour of revelation thence arising, with great knowledge of history, precision, and force of reasoning. I hope I shall be indulged a liberty of dissent from his

is here interwoven with the other, and both are set before our eyes at the same time, that we may know what God will do by what he has done, that being one great end for which all Scripture was written; be in pain for ourselves; avoid the misery hanging over our heads; and be prepared by repentance and faith, to meet our Lord with joy at his second coming.

PRAYER.

Holy Lord God, who didst pronounce the sentence of death upon thy new-made creature, our first father, and all his posterity, for sin; and deliver thy own people, the Jews, to destruction, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, by crucifying thy Christ, the Lord of glory; let these thy judgments, and all others which thou hast caused to be recorded in Scripture for our admonition, convince us of the great evil and certain punishment of sin. Let thy word be assuredly believed by us, as the sacred repository of all divine truth, the discovery of thy nature and will, and the only guide and light of our benighted souls. We have sinned; we have done wickedly; we have provoked thy displeasure by our manifold transgressions of thy law; we have made the sentence of death our own every day of our lives; and how then shall we be able to endure the severity of thy justice, or what can we plead for ourselves, when thou callest for the book of our hearts and lives? Lord, we plead thy mercy, thy covenant,

opinion, with regard to this chapter, as I suppose, with many others, that it does not relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem, but, in part, to a future coming of Christ; whether in his millennial kingdom, or finally to judgment, or both, I do not presume to determine. His lordship allows that the expression is sometimes too lofty to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem, and may, therefore, in a typical sense, be applied to the end of the world; but it seems to me that the two subjects are kept distinct, and that whenever one is spoken of, the other is not.

thy own Son. O Jesus, do thou answer for us, we commit our cause to thee; do thou save us, or we perish. Let thy Spirit speak the virtue of thy atoning blood to our affrighted consciences, and confirm us in the belief of thy all-sufficient sacrifice; that when we revere the justice of our offended God, and tremble for our iniquities, we may adore his wisdom and bless his goodness, for making thee the propitiation for our sins, and saving us by a great deliverance. Lord, establish us in thy truth, confirmed to us by the miracles, and sealed with the blood of our great High Priest; and grant that our faith may have its perfect work, in our love of thee, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us, continuance in well-doing, and patient waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Amen.

SECTION LVI.

St. Matthew, xxv. 1.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven—Christ's kingdom of grace, as to the different conditions of those who are in it, either intent upon securing the blessings of it to themselves, or, in the main, unconcerned about them; together with their being finally confirmed in it, or shut out of it for ever.

—*Be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*—The allusion is to the custom of the bridegroom's bringing his bride home in the night, and their friends going out to meet them with lamps.

Ver. 2. *And five of them were wise.*—For heaven. The Scripture knows of no other wisdom, and was given to teach it. Do you neglect the means of attaining it

Scripture reading, and prayer for the Holy Ghost, to make it wisdom in your hearts? You have it not; your case is evident; you shut yourselves up in wilful blindness.

—*And five foolish*—Not by downright unbelief, or total neglect of religion, for they put themselves in company with those who went to meet the bridegroom; but contenting themselves with an outward profession, and sleeping over their work.

Ver. 3. *They that were foolish, &c. took no oil.*—The lamp, you know, must be fed. So must the spiritual life, by a constant use of all the means of grace. You see at once the folly of thinking you have that life, without a suitable care on your parts to preserve and maintain it.

Ver. 4. *But the wise took oil*—And were therefore wise. The lamp is a profession of faith, and a holy life; and the oil which feeds it, is a lively faith, and a continual supply of the Spirit of grace, to be obtained by prayer and earnest seeking.

Ver. 5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*—Either the wise, at times, as well as the foolish; or all in the sleep of death.

Ver. 6. *And at midnight there was a cry*—The cry which is to awaken us all out of our sleep. Hear it now in the depth of your souls. He will, he will come.

Ver. 7. *Then all those virgins arose,* &c—Observe, they are all represented to the last as intending to meet the bridegroom, but the foolish as not knowing how utterly they were unprovided for it. Examine, and make deep search into thyself. What art thou doing in the world, and what is uppermost in thy thoughts? Oh! Why wilt thou live and die a deceived man, and expect to meet thy Lord, as a friend, at his coming, when thou art sunk into such a dead carelessness about it!

Ver. 8. *Our lamps are gone out.*—They had not faith

kindled by the Spirit, and working by love, and their lamps were now gone out for ever. What a dreadful point of time!

Ver. 9. *Lest there be not enough for us and you.*—The meaning is, that they had barely enough for themselves: and that if we have not oil of our own, all the world cannot help us to it.

—*But go ye rather to them that sell.*—Who are they? None has this oil but Christ; and he does not sell, but give. The price, if any, is self-emptiness and sense of misery. Go to him instantly. It may be too late to-morrow.

Ver. 10. *And while they went to buy, &c.*—And so were out of the way just at the critical time. He would not stay for their return; it was their business to be ready for his coming.

—*And they that were ready, went in.*—Art thou ready; a humble, faithful believer, and watching against that hour? Blessed be he that came in the name of the Lord to make us ready, and is now speaking to us for that purpose.

—*And the door was shut*—Never to be opened!

Ver. 11. *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*—They were mistaken; he never had been their Lord, and he would not now. Behold the confidence of a lazy profession. Lord, open to us now. Discover us to ourselves; open thy kingdom of grace to us in all its privileges; and open our hearts to receive it, that we may experience all its blessed effects, and be received into thy kingdom of glory.

Ver. 12. *I know you not.*—Because they knew him not. "Lord, Lord," is nothing to him, without a faith to prize his benefits, a heart to love him, and a will to be governed by him.

Ver. 13. *Watch, therefore.*—It is our Lord's own

inference and conclusion from the whole. Ponder the word, and let it keep thy whole soul awake to the great business of thy everlasting interest in him.

—*For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*—He cometh when death cometh; and you know not how soon that may open, or shut the door for ever.

LECTURE.

Our Lord's design in this parable cannot be mistaken, he himself tells us what it is; it is to put all who are called by his name, and hope to be owned by him, upon watching and preparing for his coming. Every man's death is that time, the Lord's coming to *him;* and now mark what follows. If we have been looking and waiting for it, in faith, patience, and well-doing, he will take us to himself, we shall sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; if we have sinned, or dozed away all our time, or lived only to ourselves, and to the cares of the world, in ignorance or neglect of our great work under Christ, we shall be separated from him, and shut out of his kingdom for ever. I must ask you one question upon this, and may the Spirit of God come close to your hearts with it: Have you a serious thought and purpose of being ready? Then you have been convinced of sin, and of death for sin. You have seen the corruption and helplessness of your nature, and the misery of a natural state; then you have been made sensible of your want of a Redeemer, and of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save you; then you have been carefully inquiring what you must do to get an interest in him; then you have fled to him in the peril of your souls, as your only refuge from condemnation, and are now living unto him in all such

ways as he directs, and you know to be necessary for securing your portion in him. You are diligent readers of Scripture, to know what God has done for you, and to hear him speaking to you in it; you use prayer as for your lives; you attend constantly upon the public worship of God, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper; you have regard to all God's commandments; you keep the one thing needful steadily in view; and when you think with yourselves what you would ask of God, if you might have your wish, you can answer, and say at once, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, a heart to love him, and a will to obey him.

I have told you what you are, and will, and must be, if you are truly waiting for the coming of the Lord, in Christian faith, hope, and living; Christ will be your joy, his salvation your comfort in life and death, and St. Paul's question to him will be always uppermost in your thoughts, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to "do?" Let your consciences speak; let your hearts tell you whether it is so or not. Alas! I fear they will not. I must therefore speak; I must tell you the truth, whether you will hear it or not; I must be faithful to your souls. Indeed, my brethren, there is hardly the least appearance of any such knowledge, faith, or work among us, as I have briefly mentioned; generally speaking, no sense of sin, nor dread of a sinful state; no inquiring after Christ; no hunger and thirst for his blessings; no looking and longing for redemption by him, as if you were sold into slavery, and captives in a dungeon, as, indeed, you are, till he delivers you from your natural darkness, from the curse of sin, from all your spiritual enemies; no submission to the authority of the Most High God, nor solemn purpose of obedience; no show of religion, except coming to church on Sundays, and that

in very many not constantly, and the coming now and then of a few to the sacrament. What, my friends? Is this all? Is this believing to the saving of the soul? Is this having oil in your lamps? Is this watching for the coming of your Lord? Is this being ready? Will you abide by this poor form of an empty profession, and rest your eternal hopes upon it? Know your mistake; know your blindness; know your unbelief, and want of conversion; consider, and be instructed from what you have heard to-day.

The foolish virgins put themselves in company with those who waited for the bridegroom, and expected to enter in with them to the marriage; but being unprovided of oil in their lamps, had the door shut upon them, and were rejected for ever, with those heart-breaking words, "I know you not." What now will you say to this, and what is your condition this hour, if you have nothing to allege for yourselves, nothing to plead for your admission into heaven, but your baptism and Christian name? I say again, the foolish virgins were seekers; they pretended to be in the way to the kingdom of heaven; they had a form or appearance of religion, and came boldly to the door, with these words in their mouths, "Lord, Lord, open to "us;" but, alas! it was too late; it was in vain; hear it once more, a name, a form, a profession of religion only, is not seeking truly, and according to the mind of Christ; nor will any such, whatever they may think of themselves, have the door opened to them. The Lord make you know and feel in your hearts what the truth of conversion is; that, coming to him in repentance and faith, cleaving to him in all holy obedience, and desiring nothing so much as to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you may be received and welcomed by him, as his faithful servants, in the day of his coming.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, who hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine unto us, and received us into thy kingdom of grace, as the way to thy everlasting kingdom of glory in heaven; grant that we, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts by faith, may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by gladly submitting to his teaching and authority, and walking in the Spirit. Let thy love be a holy fire in our souls, and do thou keep it burning day and night with continual supplies of thy grace. Keep us ever mindful of that time when we shall lie down in the dust, and be sealed up in our graves to the coming of our Lord; and of thy great mercy teach us the heavenly wisdom of making our lives a continual preparation for it. Let thy word be ever before us as our guide; do thou bless it to us, and deliver us from the wretched deceit of thinking that we are in the way to eternal life, when we neglect the means of attaining it. Call powerfully to those who are lying in the dead sleep of a sinful, careless, or worldly life: stir up thy children to greater degrees of watchfulness and fidelity, and seal the instruction we have now heard to all our hearts, that we may not be surprised with the midnight cry, and found without oil in our lamps. When we hear those awakening, awful words, Behold! the bridegroom, the Lord cometh; let our souls answer, Come, Lord Jesus, come now; as thou hast purged our sins, and redeemed us by thy death, come and live in us; be thou our Lord and Governor, take possession of us by thy Spirit, make us thine in faith and purity here, thine for ever in the glory and blessedness of thy kingdom. We know not the hour of thy coming; we know thou wilt come; we know thou camest into the world with bowels of pity to make us ready for thee; forbid it, Lord, that our knowledge of thee, and of our great work under thee,

should lie dead upon our hands, or that thou shouldest say to any of us, in that day, I know you not. God be merciful to us, and help us; that, being cleansed from all our sins, and keeping our eyes steadily fixed on the one thing needful, we may be found of thee in peace, and received to thy mercy in Jesus Christ, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION LVII.

St. Matthew, xxv. 14.

Who called his own servants.—It is of the utmost importance to us, to bear it continually upon our hearts, that we are all the servants of the Most High God, have our daily task assigned us, and are accountable to him for our fidelity. Not knowing, or not sufficiently attending to this, is the great blindness and sin of the world.

Ver. 15. *To every man according to his several ability.*—Consider what is before you. Know your own work, and keep your thoughts bent to it. Look not at those who are higher in grace or abilities, to be discouraged, but to imitate them; nor at those who are lower, to nourish pride, but to be thankful, and double your diligence.

Ver. 16. *Went and traded with the same.*—You know what trading is, and that those who would be successful in it, must be sober and diligent, and keep their thoughts close to it day by day. Are you thus trading for the greatest of all gains? Can you think of one day in your life, one sabbath, that was ever so employed for heaven?

Ver. 18. *He that had received one,* &c.—He that had the least work to do, was the only one of the three that made a difficulty of it. God, who knew this man's

heart, would not entrust him with five or two talents, to increase his condemnation, but could not dispense with his doing nothing.

Ver. 19. *After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh.*—This is said to assure us of the certainty of his coming, and that, whether it is sooner or later, we may not make a handle of it for being slothful.

—*And reckoneth with them.*—He has his eye upon what we are doing, though we think him absent, and *his* accounts, when he comes, will be very exact. Suppose it should be to-morrow, what account have *you* kept? Would you say, as you do now, that you have done what lay in your power? For the love of God, let the thought of this reckoning bring you to Christ without delay, to cleanse and heal you, and put you upon a new work of careful preparation for that time. And, whoever you are, never forget that you are servants.

Ver. 21. *Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*—O sweetest of all sounds! This it is that supports and enlivens the faithful soul in all its labours and conflicts.

Ver. 24. *I knew thee, that thou art an hard man.*—Horrid blasphemy! and yet it lies lurking at the heart—God's work is hard—Surely he will not exact it strictly of us. But the parable says he will; and believing, or not believing it from Christ's mouth, gives us up to heaven or hell. Men's thoughts of God are generally according to their dispositions. A wicked, slothful man, is averse to the belief of a just, pure, holy God. And from hence it comes to pass, that the revelation he has made of himself is disregarded by some, and rejected by others.

Ver. 24. *Reaping where thou hast not sown.*—Oh! not so. All we have is of his own giving and blessing; and if he has not a full harvest from us, it is because we do not look to him for it, but set bounds to his power.

Ver. 25. *And I was afraid.*—His fear wrought just

the wrong way; it should have put him upon action. This shows to what miserable shifts we are driven, to excuse ourselves for not doing God's work.

—*Lo, there thou hast that is thine.*—Indeed, he had not. If you were to put seed into the hands of a servant, under a strict charge and obligation to sow it, and look well to the growth of it, you would not think it enough to have the seed returned unsown.

Ver. 26. *Thou wicked and slothful servant.*—Wicked, in God's account, because slothful. He had done no harm, but then he had done nothing. And how slothful! not to be full of concern for the recovery of the soul, for growth in grace, for Christ, and all his blessings.

Ver. 27. *Thou oughtest, therefore,* &c.—Hear this; thou oughtest; it is thy duty; this will be strictly required of thee. God has appointed thee a work, and whatever thou art, whatever else thou art doing in the world, it must not be neglected; his talent must not rust in thy hands.

Ver. 29. *For unto every one that hath*—By diligence in improving.

—*That hath not.*—Does not value, and improve what he has received.

Ver. 30. *And cast ye the unprofitable servant.*—Now stand forth with your hopes and pretensions, you who are in a thoughtless, dozing, inactive state, with respect to God and religion. Behold, your condition is damnable, and if you die in it, will consign you to outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

LECTURE.

My brethren, you have heard our Lord's doom upon the unprofitable, slothful servant. Are there no souls

here in this condition? Ignorant of their great work and business in the world, and unconcerned about it; and therefore ignorant, because they are unconcerned. I fear there are many, very many such in this, and all other places; thinking and calling themselves Christians, and expecting to be owned by Christ as his disciples, who never thought once in their whole lives what it is to be so, and have not so much as a Christian appearance. Would to God that, upon hearing this awakening passage of Scripture, and the sentence which was passed upon the slothful servant, you might say to yourselves, one by one, Lord, is it I? Is this my case? Am I thus thoughtless about my soul, as regardless of my spiritual, everlasting interest, as this man was; and if I die in this condition, as sure to have the same sentence pronounced upon me? Will the Lord surely come to reckon with me, and do I never think of that time, nor take any care to have my accounts in readiness for him? Do but once say this truly, and with godly fear for yourselves, and all may yet be well; it will be a happy entrance upon your great work, and God is with you in every step of it, and will enable you to bring it to perfection. But instead of this, what do you do? You put all such thoughts from you day after day, and year after year, thinking and saying that you do no harm, and that you live quietly and honestly in the world. Now if this was true, as, generally speaking, it is not, what is it, at the best, but owning and declaring that you have no weighty sense upon your minds of the necessity of caring for the soul, but are hiding your talent in the earth, and doing just nothing at all? You say again, that you have other business upon your hands, which must be minded. What! Do you mean in the first place, and to the neglect of your salvation, of Christ's work, of eternity? Do you not see at once that you are in the darkness of unbelief, and condemned out of your

own mouths? You will say farther, Must we be always poring upon our hearts; always thinking of God and heaven; always upon our knees? Indeed, my brethren, you would often think of these things when you do not, be often at prayer when you are not, if you knew and believed how greatly it concerns you to live in the faith of Christ and the fear of God, and to go to heaven when you die. Some, too, I hear saying, that they have as good hearts as the best, or that they do what lies in their power, though it is evident to all the world that they are careless and unawakened, and have no manner of concern about their salvation. But away with such vain excuses; the portion of Scripture which you have now heard lies full against them all; Christ will admit of none of them.

If, when nothing else will do, you should suppose that you have an eye to your great work under Christ, and are not unmindful of your souls, let me tell you, in few words, what that work is, and if you are seriously engaged in it, how you will be carrying it on. Your work is recovery from a state of sin and condemnation, to a sense of God's peace, and a will to please him in all well-doing. This, I say, is your work; and if you really believed it, believed that your life, your soul, your hope of seeing the face of God in heaven, your everlasting happiness or misery, depended upon it, what would you do, and how would you be carrying it on? You would not be ignorant of it; you would read the Scriptures diligently, to know, as exactly as you can, what it is; you would be in a state of prayer for a blessing upon your souls; you would attend constantly upon the worship of God in this place, and set it up in your families; you would come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as often as you have opportunity; you would spend no sabbaths in a thoughtless idleness; I say, you would use the means which God has appointed for your growth in

grace, and all conscientiously for this end, that you might be partakers of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, glorify God for his mercy, live to him in obedience, and in the joyful expectation of hearing those blessed words from the mouth of your Lord, "Well done, thou good "and faithful servant." This then is your touchstone, and here you must not trifle upon the peril of your souls. Ignorance, sloth, hiding your talent, doing nothing, is unbelief, and will as certainly give you up to condemnation as downright wickedness. If, therefore, you would be approved of Christ, you must know your work under him, and apply yourselves to the discharge of it with that diligence, care, and fidelity, which he requires of you. Nothing else is conversion; and nothing else that you can plead for yourselves will stand you in any stead at the great day of accounts. If you would be Christians indeed, you must first believe what Christ has done for you, and in that faith live unto him according to the rule he has given you, and have nothing so much at heart as to be prepared for his coming.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, thou hast made and redeemed us to glorify thee by our willing obedience, and yield ourselves in all things to thy disposal. Thou hast appointed us our work; and, when we were lost to the sense of it, living only to our own will and pleasure, in the lusts of the flesh, or the cares of this life, thou didst send thy Son to bring it to our remembrance; to make reconciliation for our past neglect of it; to quicken us to a suitable diligence in it; to assist us in the performance of it; and whatever we do as unto thee, in truth and sincerity, thou promisest, for his sake, graciously to accept and reward it. Enable us, O Lord, to make deep search into ourselves, to consider and examine what knowledge we have of our great work,

what progress we have made in it, whether we desire, above all things, to see it prosper in our hands, and are looking up continually to thee for a blessing upon it. Let thy word, which we have heard this day, be as fire searching our inward parts; that being convinced of our ignorance, sloth, and spiritual deadness, we may, from henceforth, redeem the time, be careful to use the talents, which thou hast committed to us, to thy glory, labour earnestly for our souls, receive directions from thee in what way our pains will be successful, and resolve, in the power of thy Spirit, to put them in practice. The book of knowledge is in our hands; it tells us of our fall, sin, and danger, and of a wonderful work of mercy and redemption, and thy grace is promised to make it light and strength in our hearts. Great, O Lord, is thy goodness to us, in thy calls and warnings, in the gift of thy Son, in the offer of thy Spirit, in the hope of eternal life, which thou hast set before us. Suffer us not to neglect such means of deliverance and salvation; but grant, for thy mercy's sake, that, being washed in the blood of the everlasting covenant, renewed by thy grace, and waiting for the coming of our Lord, we may enter into the joy which thou hast prepared for all thy faithful servants in Christ Jesus, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

SECTION LVIII.

St. Matthew, xxv. 31.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, &c.—He is a Christian who makes this awful time present to himself, lives continually under a sense of it, and is in a state of diligent preparation for it, according to the mind of Christ.

Ver. 32. *He shall separate them* — According to their own choice, and separation of themselves *now*.

Ver. 34. *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* — For none but the faithful; and for them only by the grace and love of God.

Ver. 35, 36. *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat,* &c. — Confessed, relieved me in my distressed, suffering, persecuted members, and proved your faith by its effects.

Ver. 37, 38, 39. *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when,* &c. — Thinking themselves unworthy, having kept no register of their good deeds, knowing the imperfection of them, and their reward to be of grace, and far beyond their desert.

Ver. 41. *Depart from me, ye cursed.* — Having departed first from *him*. His heaven, if he could bestow it upon them, his presence, his service, his attendants, would be as much their aversion then, as they are now. All such may conceive something of the unhappy state they are in, and the curse they are under at present, by considering that heaven itself would be a curse to them.

Ver. 44. *Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when,* &c. — With astonishing blindness they wondered to the last to be charged with any neglect of, or disregard to, him. And we are here plainly given to understand, 1. That many live and die in utter ignorance of themselves. 2. That faith worketh by love. And, 3. That where there is no lively working for Christ's sake, there is no faith.

Ver. 46. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* — It is dangerous presumption, to say that the words everlasting and eternal, as applied to life or punishment, have different meanings, when the original word is the same.

From this whole passage it is alleged, that Christ, in the most decisive manner, lays the salvation of men upon their works. To affirm that they will not be rewarded according to their works, would certainly be great ignorance of Scripture. But then those works must either be absolutely perfect in themselves, to merit a reward, or be washed in the blood of Christ, and only good as springing from a root of faith in, and love to, him, which are evidently supposed to be the ground of the works here mentioned; and who then will abide by the former plea? Lord, it is of thy grace that we do any thing that is good, and of thy mercy that we are accepted. Purify our hearts by faith, that, in the sense of thy undeserved goodness to us, we may abound in acts of mercy to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith; and inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for all that unfeignedly love thee in Jesus Christ.

LECTURE.

We may consider this twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew as one of our Lord's last legacies to the world, it being delivered by him but three days before his death. I say, for this reason, if for no other, we may suppose it contains matter of great importance to us, calls for our most serious attention, and requires to be well understood and laid to heart. In the parable of the ten virgins, he warns us of the necessity of watching and being ready for his coming, or, which is the same thing to every one of us, the hour of death; and that, if we are not, we must not expect to enter in with him to the marriage; the door will be shut upon us for ever. What does the diligent, conscientious, Christian reader of Scripture say to this?

Am I watching for the coming of my Lord? Is it my desire, endeavour, and earnest prayer, to keep the lamp of a pure heart and a holy life always burning, and to have it fed with a lively faith, and a continual supply of the Spirit of grace?

In the parable of the slothful servant, he sounds an alarm to those who think well of their condition, though the work he has appointed them lies dead upon their hands, and they have no proof to give of any true concern for their souls. What! says the man, who desires to profit by what he hears, is this my case? Do I know nothing, believe nothing, do nothing? Do I pass all my time in a dozing, dreaming condition, never considering what Christ has done for me, nor what he expects from me? If I do, I am here told my doom; and when God comes to reckon with me, shall as surely be pronounced wicked, as this man was, who hid his Lord's talent in the earth, and be given up to weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever. My brethren, I beg of you to understand; though we are not openly wicked, though, in the main, we are good-natured and inoffensive, prudent and civil, and have some form of religion, it may be only a natural state; and no account will be made of all this, if we are unawakened to a sense of our condition, ignorant of our danger and misery in sin, were never inwardly stirred up to seek after Christ as our only remedy, and, therefore, strangers to the life and power of religion, remiss and slothful in the great and necessary work of our salvation. God will say of all such, whatever else they may have been doing in the world, whatever they think of themselves, "Take from "him that he hath" given him to make use of, and he would not; he hath not done the work I appointed him to do; "cast the unprofitable servant into outer "darkness."

And, lastly, to give the greater weight to these two

parables, as well as to all his foregoing instructions, and that what he had delivered, in the course of his ministry, might make a deep and lasting impression upon our minds, he concludes his teaching with opening to us the process of the day of judgment, and setting it, as it were, before our eyes. You have had it now read to you; and, if you have heard it with any degree of attention, cannot but perceive that our examination, at the last day, will turn upon what we have done, and what fruits our faith has produced. God be thanked, we shall not then, if Christians, be questioned whether we have kept the whole law, from the beginning to the end of our lives, without spot of sin, or the least failure in our obedience; for so we must all be given up to condemnation. God be thanked, he who is to be our Judge is also the Son of man, has a feeling of our infirmities, took our nature upon him, that in it he might take away the sin of it, and be made the Lord our righteousness; for there never was that man born of Adam, who can stand in judgment before God, without an interest in his precious blood-shedding, all-sufficient merits, and perfect righteousness. God be thanked that we are next to hear of Christ crucified. God be thanked, and praised for ever, for this blessed Gospel-relief, and most comfortable truth of Scripture, that by grace we are saved through faith, and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But nevertheless, the faith which saves us, worketh by love, keepeth the commandments, and maketh us new creatures; and if our faith hath not its proper fruit and natural operation, it proves itself at once to be dead faith, that is, nothing but pretence and self-deceit. And for this reason, though our works, as being imperfect, cannot be pronounced of God what they are not, and, therefore, of themselves cannot save us, yet, we are told, the principal inquiry will be concerning them, as they are the

only evidence we can have to give of our sincerity with Christ, and of the truth and soundness of our faith.

And that Christ here speaks only of believers, and of their works done to believers, in faith, and for his sake, not as the ground, or meritorious cause of their reward, but as the fruit and proof of their love to him for the great salvation he has wrought for them, is evident: 1. Because faith is the right Christian principle of action, distinguisheth a Christian from all other men, and whatever proceeds from it is therefore accounted by Christ as done to himself. 2. Because the persons here spoken to are represented as retaining to the last a sense of their unworthiness, and as it were disclaiming all title to the glory now in their view, for any thing they had done. This is the true character of believers, who, as sure as they are such, and know how they are saved, make no reckoning of their works and services. Whereas those on the left hand, blind to the last, boldly advance their pretensions to favour, and seem surprised to have it laid to their charge, that they had left any thing undone. 3. It can hardly be supposed that Christ calls any but believers his brethren; surely not those whom he pronounces accursed. And, therefore, the works on which he sets so great a value, are not indiscriminately those of liberality, or bounty to the poor, how great soever; but only acts of kindness flowing from dear respect to him, and the charity of relieving and comforting his needy, suffering, persecuted members, as such, and because they belong to him. It is not hereby intended to discountenance the exercise of beneficence, from whatever motive it may proceed, nor confine it to those of the household of faith, if they could certainly be known. Doing good for Christ's sake is not only the truest, but the most extensive principle of action, takes in all mankind, and is great in his

account, whoever is the object of it. But, nevertheless, the kindness showed to believers under that denomination, and owning Christ and his truth in them, though with cost and danger, as being the visible effect, and sure evidence of a lively faith, is that which, in a more especial manner, is here proposed to our imitation.

What now does the awakened soul say upon the whole, knowing, from our Lord's own mouth, that the awful time will come, and that every man's sentence will be according to what he hath done? He says at once, What is all the world to my interest and concern in that great day? God forbid that I should be unmindful of it, and neglect my preparation for it; and may the God of all grace bless this warning to me which I have now heard, and seal the instruction to my heart. Do you not hear this warning and instruction? Are these solemn words lightly regarded by you, and will you still go on careless and unawakened, without ever remembering that God will bring you to judgment? You should tremble to think of your condition. If what you have heard is true, what will become of you? Hear it again, and the Lord strike it deep into all your souls this day—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And know for certain that the Scripture cannot be broken; God is not a man that he should lie; Christ did not say what he never intended to make good; "these," all who appear before Christ without a living, working faith, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." Speak, Lord, thy own words with thy own power; for though we know and believe them to be thine, we shall hear them in vain, without the operation of the Holy Ghost. Blessed Spirit, reveal them to our hearts. And for this let us all pray.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God and heirs of everlasting life; grant us, we beseech thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom. Let that day be ever present to our minds, when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of the things done in the body, and receive according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad. We are bound to thank thee for the warning thou hast given us of it; for the method thou hast taken to prepare us for it in Jesus Christ; for the gift of thy Spirit to quicken us to a lively expectation of it, and conduct us happily to it through all the dangers and temptations of this mortal life. Let thy word, which we have heard this day, be assuredly believed by us, that renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, according to our vow in baptism, we may separate ourselves to Christ now in will and desire, despise every thing in comparison of our portion in him, and be confirmed in all well-doing, by meditating continually on the glory and blessedness of being owned by him as his faithful servants. Lord, it is of thy grace that we do any thing that is good, and of thy mercy that we are accepted. Purify our hearts by faith, that in the sense of thy undeserved goodness to us we may abound in acts of mercy to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith, and may inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for all that unfeignedly love thee in Jesus Christ, our hope, our blessed Redeemer and only Saviour. Amen and Amen.

SECTION LIX.

St. Matthew, xxvi. 1.

The Fourth Day of the Holy Week *.

When Jesus had finished all these sayings — Either what he had to declare in the course of his ministry, or since his last coming to Jerusalem.

Ver. 2. *And the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified* — A death inflicted only on slaves, and the worst of malefactors. Mark with what ease and calmness he speaks of it, knowing that for this end he came into the world. Nevertheless, there was one thing, and but one in all nature, that could put his fortitude to the trial, as you will find in this chapter and the next.

Ver. 5. *But they said, not on the feast,* &c. — Nay, but it must be then, in spite of their subtilty, that the true Paschal Lamb might be offered on the paschal feast; and the same will of God, which delivered him into their hands, appointed also the time.

Ver. 7. *There came unto him a woman, having an alabaster box of very precious ointment,* &c. — The most precious thing she had, or could think of, to show respect to Christ. There are two other instances of the same kind recorded besides this, Luke, vii. John, xii. and all of women. The tender passions, in which they excel, exert themselves with equal force when they are sanctified by grace.

Ver. 8. *His disciples had indignation.* — St. Mark also says, *some* had indignation; which shows it to be a different action, at a different time from that, John, xii.

* Mark, xiv. 1—11. Luke, xxii. 1—6. John, xiii. 1—30.

where Judas only is mentioned as finding fault, together with the reason of it, viz. because he was a thief. But that censure did not belong to the other disciples, and therefore it is omitted here.

—*To what purpose is this waste?*—They were not capable at this time of entering into the spirit and temper with which the action was performed. So we, with our cold hearts, may be too apt to censure what Christ highly approves.

Ver. 10. *For she hath wrought a good work upon me.*—Let us all think how we may give him occasion to say of us, that we have wrought a good work upon him. He will set a high value on a single word spoken for him.

Ver. 11. *But me ye have not always*—Notwithstanding, he has told us in the foregoing chapter in what sense we have, and must have, *him* always with us.

Ver. 12. *She did it for my burial.*—This was a word to the disciples. They thought not of his death, and much less that it was so near at hand.

Ver. 13. *Verily I say unto you, wheresoever,* &c.—Great was her faith and love; and Christ would have the memory of the action preserved for our sakes, and to show how well pleased he is with the open expression of our love to him. Thou wilt not grudge to be at some cost for him, if thou hast ability. Thy heart may be this box of precious ointment, if thou hast no more.

Ver. 14. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went,* &c.—You verily think you abhor Judas and his treachery, and that you would not have sold Christ for the world. But remember every sinner sells him over and over again, and many times for much less than thirty pieces of silver.

Ver. 15. *For thirty pieces of silver*—The price of a servant; Exod. xxi. 32. Canst thou be so undervalued?

LECTURE.

When the soul is awakened to a sense of its condition, sees its own sin, and the damnableness of all sin, in the light of Scripture, and by conviction from the Spirit of God, it bestirs itself amain for deliverance, and looks out every way for help. Its great inquiry will then be, What must I do to be saved? What shall reconcile me to a just and justly-offended God? What can raise me to a state of hope and comfort, and settle me upon a firm foundation of rest and peace? Blessed be God, we have the answer here before us in the account of Christ's sufferings, crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead, recorded in the three last chapters of this Gospel; and what we were told in the beginning of it, that his name was "called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins," is now fully opened to us. His death was the salvation there spoken of, the concluding act of his obedience for man, the accomplishment of the work which the Father gave him to do, our discharge from the guilt of sin, deliverance, redemption, and restoration to the favour of God. To this you are now to turn your attention; and I pray God fix your eyes and hearts on Christ crucified. In the course of this Gospel you have heard of many of his miracles; to the end you might see your help in him, and commit your souls to him, in full assurance that "he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him." But the great miracle is still to come, the miracle of his cross, the wonder of his love, his obedience unto death. He healed the bodies of men, cured all manner of diseases, and raised the dead to life, with a word speaking; but to bring relief to the soul, and save a perishing world, he must die himself. He did die; "he was de-

livered for our offences;" he was made a sacrifice of atonement for us; he would endure the vengeance, and satisfy the justice of God at any rate; he took our punishment upon himself, and bore our sins in his own body, to deliver us from wrath, and save us from the eternal curse of them. "Behold, therefore, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Know what it is that makes you Christians and believers; understand the nature and particular manner of your redemption by Christ; consider well the great point on which your salvation turns, and what is to be the refuge and stay of your souls against the damnation of sin. It is not that Christ makes us our own saviours in whole, or in part; it is not that he gives us power of ourselves to undo the accursed effects of sin, and become the sons of God, by any will, work, or holiness of our own. He will enable us to do great things, recover us to a state of pure obedience, and make our faith the principle of turning our hearts, and kindling our love to God. But this is not to be the soul's rest in the day of its trouble for sin. I beseech you, hear me; it is in looking to Jesus, as the Israelites were directed to look upon the brazen serpent for a cure when they were stung with serpents; it is in believing against all our guilt, and all our fears, that God laid on Christ the iniquities of us all, and that if we lay them upon his head in repentance and faith, they will never be imputed to us; and I should be a preacher of lies, false to my office, false to your souls, and to that doctrine which is the glory of all Scripture, if I did not take occasion, from this portion of it, to remind you that we have pardon and peace with God, righteousness and life, by the death and finished work of Christ; and to warn you against trusting in yourselves, when you have done all you can, and the very best

you ever will do, or making any thing but Christ and his righteousness the ground of your everlasting hopes. You may know many things; you may do many things in religion; you may grieve for your sin, and be burthened with it, and in earnest striving against it; but if it is to be clean in your own eyes; if it is to make your peace with God, and put your own repentance, or endeavours, or prayers, or sincerity, in the place of Christ; if you lay any other foundation of your pardon and acceptance than Christ crucified, and have not the happy skill to keep what he has done and suffered for you always separate in your minds from any thing that you do yourselves, you are not believers; you make Christ of no effect; you set up another Gospel in opposition to him. But know for certain that there is not another; there are not two Gospels or methods of salvation; there is but one atonement for sin, and one way for any to be made partakers of it, which is, faith in the mercy of God appointing and declaring it as our remedy, with a penitent acknowledgement of our guilt, and utter inability to help ourselves. O man, O sinner, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and that thou mayest believe, be humble. Do not think so highly of thyself, as that thou canst answer thy Maker when he brings thee to judgment; nor so lightly of thy sin, as that it could be purged with any less sacrifice than the blood of the Son of God. But do not stop here; apply it to thy own soul; believe that it was shed for thee, and that though thy sins are ever so many and great, yet, when they are seen and repented of, it is of sufficient value to outweigh them all, and accepted of God for thy eternal justification. This, as far as I know and believe, is the Gospel of our peace, and the will of God for the salvation of a guilty world; and I am bold to speak it to you, on the authority of an

inspired apostle, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 3. The Lord speak the word of his grace to your hearts, that in the joy of it you may live unto him that died for you; always remembering what you heard at the conclusion of the last chapter, that whatever you do for Christ's sake will be remembered by him when he comes to judgment; and the proof of your faith, in a work of love and obedience, proclaimed before men and angels, to your unspeakable and everlasting comfort.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who gavest thy only begotten Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification, we beseech thee to keep us stedfast in this faith. Make us know and feel that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; no atonement for sin but his death; no way or means for sinful mankind to be purged from their guilt, and restored to the hope of thy favour, but by his meritorious blood-shedding. Deliver us from all pride and hypocrisy, from all blindness and hardness of heart; that, acknowledging our vileness and misery, we may thankfully embrace the offer of thy mercy, adore thy goodness, and rejoice in thy salvation. Let thy peace, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus; and grant that for his sake, and in the sense of thy love, we may devote ourselves to thy service, abound in all good works, and be accepted through him, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SECTION LX.

St. Matthew, xxvi. 17.

The Fifth Day*.

Where wilt thou that we prepare? — Lord, we know that we must prepare for thee in our hearts. Prepare them for thyself.

Ver. 18. *My time is at hand.* — He came into the world for this time, and came to it with infinite love and compassion for thee, that thou mightest say, with the same cheerfulness and resignation at the hour of death, my time is at hand.

— *I will keep the passover at thy house* — Would you think it an honour, and be glad to entertain Jesus? He offers it to every soul. Hear his voice, and open the door, and behold he comes; Rev. iii. 20. John, xiv. 23.

Ver. 22. *And they were exceeding sorry.* — If we heard Christ saying, One of you is my deadly enemy, would it not strike cold to our hearts, and put us upon saying, one by one, Wo is me, is it I?

Ver. 24. *It had been good for that man, if he had not been born.* — Mark it for your own use and instruction. Judas's guilt was of an extraordinary kind, but the words are spoken of all hardened, impenitent sinners. Though thou dippest thy hand with him in the dish, hast been baptized in his name, called thyself his disciple, and eaten at his table, they may be spoken of thee. Turn back to the last chapter.

Ver. 25. *Thou hast said.* — It may seem almost impossible that Judas should have persisted in his design, after

* Mark, xiv. 12—72. Luke, xxii. 7—71. John, xiii. 31—38; xiv. xv. xvi. xvii. xviii. 1—27.

being so plainly told of it, and the conviction he had thereby of Jesus's being privy to his thoughts. Nevertheless, so did Peter, though a much better man, sin against warning; and this knowledge and belief in us, does not restrain us, in various instances, from sinning against him.

Ver. 26. *This is my body*—Represents my body broken; and eating it, is, in effect, eating my body, and thereby having communion with, and life by me. O! taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Turn the eye of thy soul this way. Admire this great, crowning work of the Saviour, in which he has contrived and appointed the means of changing our souls into his own nature, in the same manner as our bodies are nourished by, and have the nature of, that which they feed upon; but with this difference, that in corporal eating, the body changes the food into its own substance, and in this spiritual eating we are changed into the nature of the food. O Jesus, wonderful in thy love, the Giver and the gift, increase our faith in thee; give us a hunger and thirst for thee; give us thyself, or we die.

Ver. 27. *Drink ye all of it*—You, and all others, that are my disciples, to the world's end. You, who hear this. These are Christ's words to *you*.

Ver. 28. *For this is my blood of the New Testament*—By which it is purchased, sealed, and ratified. Testament and covenant, both: testament, as we are confirmed by it in a state of sonship, and as conveying our inheritance to us: covenant, as it is a declaration of the means, by which that inheritance is to be secured.

—*Which is shed for many*—For many effectually, when seen and trusted in as the blood of atonement.

—*For the remission of sins.*—This is properly Gospel comfort, and life from the dead to a soul awakened to a sense of sin. Blessed be God!

Ver. 29. *Until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*—Who can tell what that new wine will be? Not the delights of sense; though the senses are here made our instructors, to give us some faint conception of the joys of heaven. The expression of "drinking it new" seems to be taken from the festivity and rejoicing at the time of the vintage. But, observe, he says "with you." What a sweet meditation it is, whenever you partake of the sacrament of his body and blood, to think that you will as surely be admitted to the joy of feasting with him in his Father's kingdom!

LECTURE.

You have heard to-day that our Lord, a little before his death, instituted the sacrament of the supper; and at the same time explained the nature of it to his disciples, by telling them that the bread which he put into their hands was his body; and the cup which he gave them, with a charge that they should all drink of it, was his blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sins. And that we might have no doubt concerning the intent of the command, or whether it was given only to the disciples then present, St. Paul tells us plainly that it is a "showing the Lord's death till he come," 1 Cor. xi. 26, and, therefore, to continue always in force, and be observed by all Christians to the end of the world, as a standing memorial, or perpetual declaration of the virtue of his death, and of their faith in it. Which may also be assuredly gathered from the very words here made use of, namely, that the cup is his blood of the New Testament, shed for the remission of sins. For who are they in any age who do not want forgiveness? Let all who know they do, be very thankful to

Christ for appointing this means of bringing his death to their remembrance, and setting it as it were continually before their eyes; and that you may perform this sacred action to the benefit of your souls, and to the end for which it was ordained, be careful to understand the meaning of it. Christ said to the disciples, he says to you, if you would be entitled to that high and happy name, Take, eat, this is, or represents, my body, given, broken, pierced, nailed to the cross, sacrificed for you; he says, Drink ye all of this cup, for it is the New Testament, or God's covenant of peace to you, in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; for as many as gladly accept the benefit therein declared and offered to them; for all believers.

You see then, that whatever preparation, whatever other disposition or qualification may be necessary or proper, when you come to this sacrament, the great point is faith in the death of Christ, as that "whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven;" and that as it was appointed to remind us of this joyful and most interesting article of our religion, and keep us stedfast in the profession of it, so it can be effectual to none but those who believe that Christ died for their sins, and come there in humility to have a sense of the pardon of them renewed and confirmed. Has he done great things for us? Has he delivered us from the punishment of our sins, and reconciled us to God, by taking the curse of them upon himself? He would have it believed; he would have it remembered; he has contrived a way to fix our attention upon it, and have it always kept in mind; he would not suffer us to entertain a thought that salvation is by any work of our own; he has here put the matter beyond all dispute; it is by the pardon of our sins, and pardon by the shedding of his blood.

Believe this, and then take, and eat the bread, which is a lively sign, or speaking picture of his crucified body, and drink of the cup to which he invites you, in full assurance that, as he has declared it to be for the remission of sins, it can never fail of its effect. Think and do what else you will, if you rest your souls for pardon and life upon any thing but Christ crucified, if this great truth of Scripture is not always uppermost in your minds, and especially at the time of receiving the sacrament, that we are saved, one and all, because Christ died for us, you do not discern the Lord's body; you do not understand why you take it; you are not believers.

Do not think that, because I mention faith in Christ's death, as the great point which you are to keep steadily in view, and build your hope and comfort upon as Christians, that I am advising and encouraging you to come to the sacrament without a proper frame of mind in other respects; for, indeed, and in truth, a right faith is a right frame of mind, and one cannot be separated from the other. The right faith is, that we believe and confess, on the warrant of God's word, that Christ, by his one offering of himself, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but there is no way of coming to this faith but by a penitent acknowledgment of our sins, and of the vengeance which is due to them, with a will to forsake them, and an earnest desire to keep mercy by keeping the commandments, and living unto him that died for us. When we know and believe that we are redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, and see, in the glass of his sufferings, what a depth of evil there is in sin, and how dreadfully it was punished in the person of Christ, we can never be such rebels to him, nor such enemies to our own peace, as to retain a love for it. When we consider the love of God and of Christ

in our redemption, and that this sacrament is both the sign and seal of it, not only representing, but actually conveying all the benefits of Christ's passion to every worthy receiver, we must either be totally ignorant of our condition in sin, or dead to all sense of gratitude, if we do not find it to be the kindling of our love to the Author of so great a deliverance. When we remember that we come there as sinners for a pardon, and to have our ten thousand talents forgiven, it will strongly incline us to forgive and live in charity with all the world, and fill us with everlasting shame and confusion, if we are not transformed into the likeness of that mercy by which we live. I say, this faith of itself, wherever it is a true work, will be the right temper of our minds, our greatest security against sin, a most prevailing reason for fidelity and dutiful subjection to the Saviour, and our best preparation for a worthy partaking of his most blessed body and blood. Let it be our prayer to be always kept in a sacramental frame, self-emptied, believing, rejoicing, adoring, thankful; that we may so profess our faith in Christ, as to live up to it, and always so receive the sacrament, as to be strengthened by it in faith, love, and obedience.

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy name, O Jesus, and blessed be thy goodness for reconciling us to God, by the offering of thy crucified body, and washing us from our sins in thy blood. We beseech thee to confirm us in this faith, and to work in us, more and more, a lively sense of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. That it might be assured, ly believed, and always remembered, as the ground of our hope and rejoicing, thou didst institute the sacrament of thy body and blood, and therein continually representest thyself to us in the very act of suffering and dying for

our sins. Let the memory of thy death be ever precious to us; and thy command to show it in the manner thou hast ordained, sacred to all who know thee as their Saviour, love thy salvation, and glory in the name of thy disciples. And as thou hast redeemed us to God, and restored us to a state of favour and sonship with thy eternal Father, accomplish in us all the good pleasure of thy will; make us the children of God by similitude of nature; make us thine in all holy obedience; we beseech thee to live in us; let the great love, wherewith thou hast loved us, take possession of our souls, and so rule in our hearts, that we may love thee, and all mankind for thy sake; evermore praise God for thee, and be accepted through thee, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION LXI.

St. Matthew, xxvi. 31.

All ye shall be offended because of me this night. — Little did they think how near they were deserting him by a shameful flight. As little do we know what we are, till we are tried.

Ver. 31. *I will smite the shepherd.* — This is spoken in the person of God the Father, smiting Christ for our sakes, and our sin in him.

Ver. 32. *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee* — As the shepherd goes before his sheep. How unpardonable does their desertion of Christ seem to us! and yet here is not one word of upbraiding or resentment; but, instead of it, an assurance of his resurrection, and a promise that he would not forsake *them*.

Ver. 34. *This night before the cock crow.* — That is, before three o'clock in the morning, which they called

cock-crowing. St. Mark says, before the cock crow twice; and, accordingly, a cock did crow once before the usual time.

—*Thou shalt deny me thrice.*—As he did, though he had three several warnings given him of it in the compass of a few hours; in the morning of this day, John, xiii. 38. At the supper, Luke, xxii. 34. After the supper here, and Mark, xiv. 30.

Ver. 35. *Peter said unto him,* &c. *likewise also said they all.*—In the confidence of an outward profession, but untried faith. "Be not high-minded, but fear."

Ver. 38. *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*—Not merely with the fear of death, but the sin of the world, now lying heavy on him. Oh! what a burden, and how hard to bear, even to the God-man! How could the guilt of it be more emphatically declared, and how can we help feeling it in this description of his agony under it, which is recorded for our instruction?

Ver. 39. *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me*—Is the expression of what he felt, and not what he wished. Certainly it was no part of his will, neither did he pray to be delivered from his passion.

—*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*—Ah! there is but one perfect, happy will in the universe, and all opposition to it, or deviation from it, is certain misery. And, therefore, to bring us to an union with it, was one great end of all that Christ did and suffered.

Ver. 40. *Could ye not watch with me one hour?*—Didst thou ever watch one hour with Christ, and for thy soul?

Ver. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*—And if we do watch and pray, we shall not enter into temptation, that is, fall by it. For the words from Christ's mouth have the nature of a promise, and cannot fail us. Come to this test. Though you may deceive

yourselves by a course of formal, unmeaning prayer, yet, on the other hand, if you do not watch unto prayer, and watch over your hearts with a godly jealousy, you may know, with infallible certainty, that you are not striving against sin, nor desirous of the blessings of the Gospel.

— *The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.*— This may not be mentioned as the ground of an excuse, but to put us upon our guard; and is strongly expressive of the danger of not watching against temptation, and the misery of being overcome by it. And, whenever we are, I believe we shall find that this direction has been neglected.

Ver. 44. *And prayed the third time, saying the same words.*— Because the disposition and distress continued the same. So the penitent, guilt-confounded soul, can say nothing but mercy! mercy! mercy! without fear of offending against, Matt. vi. 7.

Ver. 45. *Sleep on now, and take your rest.*— You have let slip the season of watching and prayer, and will soon find, to your cost, that you are not proof against temptation. Or the words might be spoken, in the way of farther reproof, ye do sleep on, and are careless to the last.

Ver. 49. *Hail, Master, and kissed him.*— Profession of Christ, with an unconverted heart, is this kiss.

Ver. 50. *And Jesus said unto him, Friend.*— Thus he speaks to thee, O sinner. Let this word go deep into thy heart.

Ver. 51. *And behold, one of them which were with Jesus, stretched out his hand, and drew his sword.*— This act of Peter's misguided zeal was calculated to injure his divine Master rather than serve him. The conclusion likely to be drawn from it would be, that he taught his followers to resist lawful authority.

Ver. 52. *All that take the sword*— Rashly, and un-

authorized, are liable, and deserve to *perish with the sword.* It was also a prediction of Peter's suffering.

Ver. 53. *Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray,* &c.—O! strong rebuke to our impotent malice! We want nothing but power to execute our purposes: Christ, with all the power of heaven at his command, would not defend himself. There was Scripture in the way, and he was all submission.

Ver. 54. *But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?*—So the Scripture must be fulfilled by us, or it will be fulfilled against us. Happy shall we be when we have this example always before us, and can say, in the power of these words, to every temptation, "How then shall the "Scriptures be fulfilled?"

Ver. 56. *But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.*—This shows to what intent the foregoing words, ver. 55, were spoken, viz. that before his hour was come, they could not take him; and when it was, the Scriptures must be fulfilled, by the same necessity that a child comes to the birth at its time.

—*Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*—Take notice of the men; and that they were the very same, who, afterwards, in the power of the Holy Ghost, went into all the world to testify their Saviour openly, with a certain knowledge that they were to lay down their lives for him.

LECTURE.

In the foregoing verses we have an account of the time and manner of Christ's instituting the sacrament, with a command to the disciples then present, and in them to all others, to perform this sacred act of Christian

worship; telling them that the bread which he gave them to eat was his body or passion, thereby represented with all its beneficial effects, and the cup which he delivered to them was his blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sins. Would he have his crucified body, and the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins, thus commemorated, and, as it were, continually presented to our senses? Did he reserve this point of instruction to the last, to give it all the weight and solemnity of his dying command, and to the end we might observe what doctrine more especially it is which this sacrament, as well as the other, was ordained to preach to us, and what stress he lays upon it? Methinks, then, it appears plainly what we should preach, and you believe. You are often hearing that the word Gospel signifies good tidings, and that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. But do you ever put your souls to answer the questions, what these good tidings are, and how he saves us? Not by any thing we can do, or that he enables us to do; not by any power, repentance, or holiness of our own; we must let that alone for ever; it is only, and altogether, by his death, as the price of our redemption, and meritorious cause of our salvation; and as sure as we come to the sacrament with this faith, we are partakers of his body and blood, and may boldly plead what he has done and suffered for us, as our discharge from the guilt of sin, and full satisfaction to the justice of God. And are not these good tidings to condemned, helpless sinners, and gladly to be received by us as nothing less than life from the dead? I beseech you, observe what it is that I am recommending to your notice, and earnestly desire to have well considered and thoroughly believed, namely, that if Christ knew the great point on which our salvation turns, it is by the remission of our sins, as that is by his body broken, and blood

shed for us. And because he ordained the sacrament of the supper for a perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby; I say, for this reason we may be sure it is necessary that we should remember what Christ is to us at all other times, and have it deeply imprinted in our hearts, that reconciliation to God, by his death, is the very belief which makes us Christians.

But, though we must always so remember Christ as to be well-grounded in this persuasion, that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; and the words which he made use of when he ordained this sacrament, as I am telling you, more especially point out this doctrine to us as the ground of our hope, and were intended to confirm us in this belief; yet we must also remember, and be well aware, what sin is which crucified him, and could be atoned with nothing but the inconceivable pains and sufferings of the Son of God. It is made little account of by the world, and sleeps quietly in our bosoms, and the breaking of a commandment is as nothing in our eyes; but see here what an evil and bitter thing it is, and how it tried all the patience even of the God-man, when he was to bear the load of it, and offer himself to the stroke of divine justice. "My soul," says he, "is exceeding sor-"rowful, even unto death." Not merely from the apprehension of dying, or the pain of the cross considered in itself; but because he was to take up our sins thereon, to suffer what we should have suffered, and feel the whole weight of God's vengeance, and our punishment, in his soul and body. Oh! there is great force of instruction in the words, and a thousand tongues to warn us of our danger, of the curse which cleaves to us for sin, and the horrible, unknown pains we must endure, if we are not delivered from the condemnation of it before we die. Let us not, therefore, mistake, nor build our hope of sal-

vation by Christ on deceitful grounds, by dividing his doctrine, or leaving out any part of it. If he was wounded for our transgressions, and had our iniquities laid upon him, by the appointment and will of God, we that repent and trust in him shall not suffer for them over again in our own persons; for "God is faithful" to his covenant with Christ, and in him with all believers, "and just to forgive us our sins," because the penalty of them has been paid. And this, which I cannot repeat too often, is the faith, comfort, and rejoicing of Christians, that our ten thousand sins will be forgiven us, as surely as we believe in him for this end. This, I say again and again, is the glory of our religion; the true knowledge of Christ; the Spirit's testimony to us concerning him, and should be the element we live in; the joy of our hearts; and working at the root of all we do.

But if sin is unfelt, unfeared, and unrepented of; if we have no sense of the evil and danger of it, nor dread of God's displeasure against us for it, in vain do we talk of believing in Christ for the remission of sins; we can possibly have no such faith, no working of desire towards it, nor desire of the mercy which comes by it, great as it is, and greatly wanted by us, any more than we would go to a physician to be cured of a distemper which we have not, or sue to the king for the pardon of life, when we know it never was forfeited. If we die in this state, what we read of Christ's agonies and sufferings, under the weight of sin then laid upon him, (and read for this end, that we may know the extreme curse of sin, and never feel it in our own persons,) will be our portion for ever and ever. Let these three things, therefore, be always kept in mind as the sum and substance of what we should know and believe in order to salvation: 1. That the wages of sin is death, even death eternal. 2. That the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 3. That no

man has a title to this gift, nor right to believe that his sins are forgiven, who does not repent of them, and endeavour, in truth and sincerity, to live by the rule which Christ has given him. Let it be our daily prayer, and the ground of all our requests to God, that we may be established more and more in these great truths of Scripture, and make them our guide to the glory which Christ has purchased for all that unfeignedly love him.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be sin for us, that in his own person he might bear and take it away; make us know and feel in the bottom of our hearts, that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved: Let thy Spirit enable us to say that Jesus is the Lord, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, and that we, whose consciences by sin are accused, by thy merciful pardon may be absolved. Let the sense of our vileness and condemnation in sin bring us to repentance, and our repentance to Christ, and Christ to thee, washed in his blood, and purified unto obedience; that, walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, we may hold fast the hope of everlasting life, and receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, by the same Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION LXII.

St. Matthew, xxvi. 58.

But Peter followed him afar off.—Now his fears began to work strongly. But think not only of Peter. Alas!

it is the case of many; though they pretend to follow Christ, it is a great way off, as to any lively faith, or pure obedience.

Ver. 60. *But found none.*—It was necessary that Christ's innocence should be declared.

Ver. 63. *But Jesus held his peace.*—It was necessary that he should not stand upon his innocence, because his intention was to suffer; neither, as being in the place of sinners, and bearing their sins, would he deny the guilt he had taken upon himself.

Ver. 64. *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.*—It is as thou hast said; I do not deny it; I am. He was silent to the charge of guilt; he could not be silent here, without denying himself to be the Son of God. And, he farther tells them, that they should one day see him, who now appeared before them as a malefactor, in all his power and majesty, as the Son of man, him spoken of by the prophet Daniel, the Messiah, or Son of God. "Every "eye shall see him!" and those to their inexpressible joy, who have seen him here in the glory of his salvation.

Ver. 66. *They answered and said, He is guilty of death.*—As taking our sin he was, and submitted to the sentence; and we never believe in him, till we know that we deserve to suffer death.

Ver. 67, 68. *Then did they spit in his face,* &c.—Turn not thy whole indignation against the vile, abominably-insulting Jew; but if thy sins had their full share in putting the Son of God to this open shame, fetch a deep groan for thyself.

O Jesus, how I long to imitate thee, to possess thy meekness, to be happy in thy patience! I see, in this single instance, what it is to be born again, and what need there is for it. When we can do as thou didst, bear the insolent stroke, the opprobrious taunt, the contemptuous spitting, calm and unruffled, we are new

creatures, have a new nature, and a joyful experience of the wisdom that cometh down from above.

Ver. 75. *And Peter remembered the words of Jesus.*—He had a root of faith in him, and though he had fallen grievously, could remember the words of Jesus for his rising again. Lord, when we fall, raise us up again, though it be with bitter sorrow; but keep us from falling, lest we never repent.

—*And he went out, and wept bitterly.*—Retire this moment into thyself. Think how soon Peter's repentance followed his sin, and how long thine has been deferred; how bitterly he wept, and what cause thou hast for it; how graciously he was received to favour again, and what a Saviour thou hast to wipe away thy tears.

LECTURE.

You must not think, dearly beloved, either that your ordinary failings and infirmities prove you to be out of the covenant of grace, or that grosser sins are so deadly, that if repented of they cannot be forgiven. This was once matter of controversy among Christians, and some, from mistaken passages of Scripture, warmly contended that the sins of believers were unpardonable; or, at least, that they were not to be received to the benefit of absolution by the church, and must be left to the unknown mercy of God. But this opinion was generally condemned, and Peter's case lies full against it. You may fall like him; you must rise again by repentance as he did; and if you do, will be received to favour, as he was, and as high in the esteem of Christ as ever; perhaps more watchful, more faithful, more zealous for the time to come, certainly more sensible of your weakness, more diffident of yourselves, and more thankful for the grace of the

Gospel. We have great cause to praise God that Peter's denial of Christ is recorded for our instruction; that we might neither presume upon our own strength, nor despair of mercy in case of transgression. Our safety consists in humble dependence on divine support to keep us from falling; and whenever we are so unhappy as to fall into sin, Christ has a call and a look for us, and Peter's repentance is our pattern, and the way to pardon, as pardon is only by Christ. For if the Gospel had ended here, Peter, notwithstanding his tears, would have been given up to condemnation; since, without shedding of blood, there is no remission, and that must be the blood of the Holy Jesus, God and man; man to suffer, and God to satisfy, and make his sufferings, in the human nature, available to our salvation. Do you know, do you believe what he has done for you? Do you commit your souls to him, with desire to be helped and saved by him? And if there is some one point on which your salvation turns more than any other, do you inquire carefully what it is, as a matter you would not be ignorant of, or deceived in, for the world? Surely, if you are a sinner, and under a sentence of death for sin, one thing is needful; you want deliverance; you must have a way to escape; you must be reconciled to God, or perish. What now will you do, and where will you look for help in this extremity? Will you offer a lame repentance, or any repentance, to God, as amends for your sin? Will you make and depend upon promises of obedience, without knowing how much goes to it, and which, therefore, you certainly never will perform? Will any obedience of yours answer for what is past, ensure your peace, and redeem your soul out of the hands of justice, when it is once forfeited by sin?

I have one thing to say to you, and if you will not hear it, you must consider what else you have to trust to, and what other foundation you can be upon for pardon

and life. Christ is your ransom, Christ is your peace, Christ is the Reconciler in his blood, and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." You will say, you do; that you are baptized into Christ, pray in the name of Christ, and come to the sacrament to remember his death, and with thankfulness to God for it. Alas! all this is soon said; but be not deceived. If we are saved by grace, through faith, for the love of God, let us understand what the grace is which saves us, and what the faith is by which we receive, and are made partakers of it. Grace is the mercy of deliverance from the sentence of condemnation we are under for sin, by the sacrifice and death of Christ, offering himself to the stroke of God's justice in our stead, and making our peace by taking our sin and punishment upon himself. So we are redeemed, so we live, so we are the children of God, happy in his favour, and heirs of his glory. And, the faith by which we receive this grace, is the heart's closing with the offer, and joyful acceptance of it, as mercy from the Lord, with a perfect renunciation of ourselves, and in opposition to any other method of salvation. Stand fast upon this ground; know yourselves to be what you are, always sinners; see your need of Christ in your very best estate; see him given to you of God in a covenant of life; see his body broken, and his blood poured out for the redemption of your souls; and if your sins were ten thousand times more and greater than they are, you need not have one fear; the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged for your present assurance and eternal justification, and nothing can hinder the effect of his gracious designs towards you but your own unbelief. My brethren, you cannot help observing that what I am saying goes beyond all forms, and is a great deal more than any outward profession of Christ. It is the work of the Spirit, however it

begun, leading us to the knowledge of sin, revealing Christ as the sole means appointed of God for deliverance from the guilt of it, and turning our wills against it. If you have not taken the first step toward Christ, which is self-condemnation and sense of the curse of sin, you never took the second, which is faith in him for the remission of it; you could not possibly cast a look toward him, nor come to him to be relieved of a burden which you never felt. And if you have taken these two steps, been convinced of sin, and laid it upon the head of Christ, with great rejoicing in the conscience, and many thanksgivings to God for the mercy of a Saviour, you will not, you cannot, stop short at the third; your faith will carry you on to obedience, and make it the steady purpose, sincere endeavour, and great work of your lives. You will then be afraid of nothing so much as losing your interest in Christ by doing what he forbids, or neglecting any thing that he has commanded; your vow in baptism, to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, will be weighty upon your minds; you will pray daily that he, who has saved you from the guilt, would also deliver you from the power of sin, and your hearts will be in your prayers.

PRAYER.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, that we might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; bring us, we beseech thee, to the hearing of thy word in faith and humility, and seal the instruction of it to our hearts. Grant that as Christ is therein revealed to us for life, we may find him in the fulness of his blessings, be washed from all spot of sin in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. Have mercy on us, and grant us thy peace, and keep us ever mindful of our obligation to live unto him that died for us. Let us search and try our ways,

and watch over our hearts lest we fall into sin; and when we do, let us call to mind that Christ is looking upon us with a mixture of grief and pity, that we may repent without delay, and turn to thee our God. Make us a happy rejoicing people in the sense of thy love; make us a willing people in the day of thy power; enable us to consecrate ourselves to thee by Jesus Christ, and accept us for his sake. Amen.

SECTION LXIII.

St. Matthew, xxvii. 1.

The Sixth Day*.

When the morning was come, &c.—The morning of the happiest day for mankind in the whole course of time.

Ver. 2. *And when they had bound him*—The Jews; our sins. All we bound him, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate. If you do not follow him with this thought in every step of his passion, this Gospel has been read to you in vain; and you will now hear the conclusion of it with cold hearts, without desire of his benefits, or faith in his death.

Ver. 3. *Then Judas, &c. repented himself*—Not truly, and toward God; for then he would not have hanged himself. All sense of sin, and remorse of conscience for it, is not repentance. Judas was stung home, and yet it is certain he did not repent, any otherwise than the devils do. Reader, this is an opening of hell to thee.

Ver. 4. *Saying, I have sinned,* &c.—He knew his sin; was horribly oppressed with the guilt of it, and could not help owning it to the chief priests, but did not confess it

* Matt. xxvii. 1—61. Mark, xv. Luke, xxiii. John, xviii. 28—40. xix.

to God with hope of mercy; and herein his repentance was defective.

And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. —This is all the comfort that the devil and sin have for us in the end. Christ has better. Lay down thy sin at the foot of his cross. Thou art hearing of his death for it, for thy sin, whenever thou offerest it up to him in repentance.

Ver. 6. *Because it is the price of blood.*—O sanctified villains! "Straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel." They would not suffer the price of blood to come into the sacred treasury, and yet it was what they themselves had given for the shedding of it.

Ver. 9. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, &c.*—They are the words of Zechariah, xi. 12, 13. It is a fair solution of this difficulty, which, I believe, was first observed by Dr. Lightfoot, that as the prophecy of Jeremiah was sometimes placed first in order in the volume of the prophets, so the whole was called by, and cited under his name. Nevertheless, they might be the words of Jeremiah himself, in some prophecy not now extant.

Ver. 11. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest*—I am, though not in the sense that Pilate meant.

Ver. 12. *He answered nothing*—To the accusation of the chief priests and elders. Standing in the place of sinners, he would not deny the guilt he bore.

Ver. 17. *Whom will ye that I release unto you?*—Dost not thou give up Christ and retain thy sin? This is now put to thy choice.

Ver. 18. *For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*—They thought they were doing an act of justice and religion. Pilate knew, and St. Matthew knew, that envy was at the bottom of it. The true motives of our actions lie deep, and, without great care, will be hidden

from ourselves. What is man, with all his sincerity, without the blood of Christ?

Ver. 19. *His wife sent unto him*, &c.—Judas, the betrayer, and Pilate, the judge of Christ, bore witness to his innocence. Here is another testimony added by a dream from heaven.

Ver. 20. *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude*, &c.—And God suffered them to prevail; so that the multitude, which just before was for Christ, now clamoured as vehemently for his crucifixion.

Ver. 23. *And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done?*—Jesus was silent in his own defence. Observe, I beseech you, how God supplied this defect, by making Pilate repeatedly speak up for his innocence; which was a more convincing testimony of it to all ages, than his own protestation would have been.

Ver. 24. *I am innocent of the blood of this just person*—Not by washing his hands, when he acted against clear knowledge and conviction.

Ver. 25. *His blood be on us, and on our children.*—It was, terribly, soon after. It will be, in the saving virtue of it, at their conversion. It is now *upon us* for good, through mercy, by their rejection of it. O! let us fly to it! If we do not seek for healing in the blood of Christ, we join with the Jews in this curse.

Ver. 28. *And they put on him a scarlet robe.*—Cruel mockery! patient Jesus! proud man that will bear nothing!

Ver. 29. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.*—This would cause exquisite pain in so tender a part, especially as the thorns were struck into his temples. Still we do not hear a word of complaint from him.

Ver. 32. *Him they compelled to bear his cross.*—He bore it himself at the first, but now probably was so faint

and weary that he could bear it no longer. But though the flesh was weak, the spirit was willing to the last.

Ver. 34. *He would not drink.*—It was a stupefying potion, and he would not lose the use of his reason, nor diminish the sense of his sufferings.

LECTURE.

THE chapter of Christ's death leads me to speak of the benefit and necessity of it, and to declare to you the great point of Christian belief. It is that "Christ died for our sins;" it is that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" it is that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," made us clean in God's sight, purged our sin, paid the price of our redemption with his blood, blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, and bound us over to death, removed our curse by taking it upon himself, satisfied the justice of God, and made it our friend; so that we need not have any more distressing fears, or trouble of conscience, on account of sin, than if it had never been committed; and when we put our souls to answer the question, What must we do to be saved? we may boldly plead the death of Christ as our atonement, offer it to God as a full discharge from the guilt and punishment of our sin, and assure ourselves on the warrant of his word, a thousand times repeated for our comfort and joy of faith, that we shall never be called to account for the debt which has been paid, and which God has accepted at the hands of Christ for our justification. Oh! what a glorious, safe condition are we brought into by the free grace and mercy of God, and how happy should we be, if we were established in the belief of it! rejoicing only in Christ, fixing our eyes

steadily upon him as our ransom, and, through him, looking on God as a reconciled Father. Remember that out of Christ he is a consuming fire; and that if you presume to approach him without an interest in Christ, though you make ever so many resolutions of amendment, and weary yourselves to death with a law work, all your endeavours, works, and services, will be rejected. Think what you mean when you say in the creed, "I believe in Jesus;" and if you would be believers indeed, let it be your firm persuasion, that as God laid on him the iniquity of us all, so he made our peace by the blood of his cross, and that, if we trust to any thing else for our reconciliation with God, we deny the necessity, and can have no share in the merit of his death. You will say, Must we not then repent, and live to God in obedience? Yes, "we must repent or perish;" but take notice withal, that we can have no right knowledge of sin, nor true repentance for it, till we see so much evil in it, and such a curse cleaving to us with it, as no endeavours of ours can remove. So long as we are insensible of the desert of it, and of our own inability to make satisfaction to the justice of God for it, our repentance will, of course, be as short as the false measure we take of it. See it in the sufferings of Christ; see it making his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; see it forcing a bloody sweat from him; see it nailing him to the cross; hear him crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and you will know better what it is, and what repentance it calls for.

And as for obedience, if it is serving God without fear, with freedom of spirit, and the affection of dutiful children, we can never attain to any thing like it but in the way of believing that "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The foundation of all we do must be laid in this faith, and it is the excellence of it to turn our hearts and wills to God in the truth of a pure obedi-

ence. It sets us free in all respects, both from the condemnation and slavery of sin; and if you were once well grounded in the sense of God's love in Christ, and prized it as your dearest treasure, I can tell you with great certainty what you would, and what you would not do. You would not live in known sin; you would not wilfully break any of the commandments; you would not be strangers to your own hearts; you would read the Scripture to know what God would have you to do; you would pray daily for a blessing upon your souls; you would worship God in your families; you would attend regularly upon the church service on Sundays, and many of you, who can, at other times; and all come constantly to the sacrament, to see Christ, as it were, in the very act of dying for you. Alas! my friends, you have no such appearance; you know this is not your state; in the main you are fearless of sin, remiss in the duties of your religion, and have cold hearts for God. And I now tell you the reason of all this; it is because you have no faith, or, which is all one, no heartfelt sense of the great blessing of a Saviour, nor thankfulness to God for redemption by him.

My brethren, the truth of God for the life of our souls is this — Christ has wrought a great salvation for us, and if ever we are made partakers of it, we must know that it is altogether his work, and receive it by faith as a mercy and gift. He suffered what we should have suffered, and did what we should do; he died to save us from the everlasting death of our souls and bodies, because nothing else could; he paid a perfect obedience to the law that it might be imputed to us, for "he is the head of the church, and the Saviour of the body," so that in union with him, and as his members, we are in the sight of God what he is. This, I say, is the glorious mystery, and great leading point of

our religion, and in this belief we have confidence towards God, and the Spirit witnessing with our spirit, that we are his children. But know also, that faith has a work to do under Christ, and that work is obedience. He says to every heart where he comes, "Keep my commandments;" and when his love is there, it sweetly constrains us to live unto him that died for us, and to walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto his kingdom and glory. So walk, and let *this* faith perfect your repentance, keep you stedfast in obedience, and be working at the root of all you do, that you may be his disciples indeed; for as Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, even so he is theirs in all the power of his love, with all the merits of his life and death.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, who hast delivered us from the curse of sin and everlasting death, by the precious death of thy dear Son; grant, we beseech thee, that we may thankfully receive this thy inestimable benefit, and evermore rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our only Saviour and Redeemer. Let thy word, "that by grace we are saved, through faith," be assuredly believed by all that hear it, and let thy peace take possession of every heart. Convince us of sin, convince us of our misery and helplessness in sin, and make the blood of atonement our only refuge in the day of our trouble for sin. And, O Lord, when we are refreshed with the sense of thy mercy, let faith have its perfect work. Renew us by thy grace, purge us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, keep the holy fire of love burning in our souls, and bring us in the way of obedience to thy kingdom of glory, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION LXIV.

St. Matthew, xxvii. 37.

And set up over his head, accusation.—His right; his triumph of love; our glory and salvation. That is seldom an accusation of the saints which the world thinks so.

Ver. 38. *Then were there two thieves crucified with him.*—He snatched one of them from the jaws of hell, to show the virtue of his cross to all repenting sinners. The other would not confess his sin, and died a thief. If thou wouldst not die a condemned man, look to Jesus.

Ver. 42. *He saved others, himself he cannot save*—He would not save himself, that he might save others.

—*Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*—He must, of all necessity, die there to be believed in. They, not knowing this, could believe nothing concerning him; and the same prejudice in them which had been proof against so many miracles, would not have yielded to this.

Ver. 44. *The thieves also cast the same in his teeth.*—Probably both at first, though one immediately repented.

Ver. 45. *From the sixth hour there was darkness,* &c.—Universal and preternatural. The sun was not regularly eclipsed, it being then full moon.

Ver. 46. *Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli,* &c.—Come here, wretched man, and take some measure of thy guilt; thine, whoever thou art. Be warned by this loud cry, what vengeance is hanging over thy head, and every moment ready to crush thee, if thou hast not made Christ thy hope. I say, take notice; let thy heart take notice how he, who bore every thing, till now, with meek silence, was so oppressed with the weight of man's sin, that it exercised all his own divine patience, and forced

him to cry out in the anguish and bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Think of his love too, and what he endured that we might not be sentenced to depart from God, nor be totally forsaken of him.

—*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—He says, "My God, my God;" and dreadful as the desertion was, it could not deprive him of this faith. Observe it for thyself, distressed soul; he may be *thy* God in the utter want of sensible comfort, thy faith may be immoveable, and thy trust in him as strong as ever.

Ver. 47. *This man calleth for Elias.*—Wresting his word Eli, Eli, as if he was still in expectation of Elias's coming.

Ver. 48. *And straightway one of them, &c. gave him to drink*—As if by way of support, and to gain time for the coming of Elias; his forerunner, if he was the Christ.

Ver. 49. *The rest said, Let be,* &c.—Elias, if he will come, is help enough without the vinegar. All in scorn.

Ver. 50. *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice.*—Of joy and exultation, for man's redemption, for the work he had finished, and the glory that was to follow.

—*Yielded up the ghost*—Of his own accord, and by an act of his own power; dying by as great a miracle as he was born, or any he had wrought during his life. When he had purged our sins, he would not retain his spirit a moment longer, but went in haste to finish his conquests, by overcoming death.

Ver. 51. *And behold the vail of the temple was rent*—The mystery of the vail being rent, is explained, Heb. ix. 8, and x. 19, 20. It was the opening of heaven to all the world through his blood, by rending the vail of his flesh; but the vail still continues unrent to those who will not enter into the holiest by this way.

Ver. 51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.*—According to the reports of modern travellers, there is a rock still to be seen, so rent as to be a standing witness of this relation, and showing, plainly, that it could be the effect of nothing but an earthquake, or divine power.

Ver. 53. *And came out of the graves after his resurrection*—Not before, though it is here related. For Christ must rise first, and they could only rise in virtue of his resurrection. And farther, it cannot well be supposed that they arose only to appear to others, and then lie down in their graves again, but to ascend with him, soul and body, into heaven.

Ver. 54. *Now when the centurion*, &c.—It is remarkable that the hearts of this heathen captain and his soldiers were shook with the earthquake, and other signs which accompanied the death of Jesus, while the Jews continued obdurate and incredulous.

—*Truly this was the Son of God.*—The Spirit endited this Gospel by St. Matthew to bring us to this confession, and saying it, with a true faith, is salvation.

Ver. 55, 56. *And many women were there*, &c.—It is recorded for the honour of these women, that they followed Jesus from Galilee, ministered unto him, did not forsake him when the disciples fled, stayed to watch his sepulchre. Mary Magdalene especially, who is mentioned first, could not desert him, who had cast seven devils out of her. His love, when thou knowest it, will keep thee as close to him.

Ver. 57. *A rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple*—A much happier condition than that of great riches. Make it your own; and bless God that you may be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him."

Ver. 58. *He went to Pilate, and begged the body of*

Jesus—That it might have a decent burial, and not be laid amongst common malefactors. With what farther view Joseph did this, is hard to say; for it is not probable that he, any more than the other disciples, thought of Christ's resurrection. It was a new thing in the earth, and we must not wonder that they were all so slow of belief in this point before the event. Let us look back a moment upon the dark scene they passed through, to be thankful for the day-light we live in.

The Seventh Day*.

Ver. 63. *We remember that that deceiver said.*—Now then turn this against them, and to your own benefit. If he did rise again, he was *not* a deceiver. He was, and is, all that thou wantest. He will raise thy soul out of its dead state, and thy body from the grave; he will dispel all thy fears, confirm thee in a state of lively hope, crown all thy wishes, and never leave thee nor forsake thee, till he has set thee at the right hand of God.

Ver. 66. *So they went and made the sepulchre sure, &c.*—It is a mighty confirmation of our faith in the article of Christ's resurrection, that his enemies took all this precaution to prevent his body being stolen away.

O Lord, be with us in the power of thy grace, as thou wast for us in thy death and resurrection; that in this belief we may walk comfortably before thee all the days of our lives; love God for the great love wherewith he loved us; die with thee to sin; take up our cross in meekness, self-denial, and patient suffering; answer the end of thy dying for us by being faithful to thee in all holy obedience; long for thy coming, and, through thy merits, be received into the innumerable company of those blessed spirits, whom thou hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

* Ver. 62—66.

LECTURE.

God is just, and man is sinful. In these two points all must agree who ever think of God and themselves. But the heinous, accursed nature of sin, the greatness of God's displeasure against us for it, and the punishment to which it exposes us in a way of justice, we should never have known without the help of revelation; and our apprehensions of this matter are still wavering and confused, or, to speak the truth, we still continue, in general, blind and unbelieving, notwithstanding the clear light and positive assertions of Scripture. Come then to the cross, and there behold the terrible justice of God. See his eternal and only begotten Son dying for the redemption of sinners, and learn from thence that, without the shedding of his blood, there could be no remission, and what sin is which required such a sacrifice. Death, you see, it must have. Sin, we know, brought death into the world. But know also, that by that word is meant the loss of God's favour, even eternal death; and that if he had not sent his Son in our flesh, to deliver us from condemnation, by taking our sin and punishment upon himself, we all must have endured the misery of it for ever in our own persons. Have these great truths of Scripture been discovered to you, and are they weighty upon your souls? Do you understand that nothing is to be so much feared as sin, nothing so much to be desired and rejoiced in as the mercy of salvation from it? And are you set down in this belief, that you are saved only and altogether by mercy, not by any repentance, humblings, works, or holiness of your own, but snatched as brands out of the fire, to the end that you may give God the glory of his grace, and determine with yourselves, as Paul did, "to know nothing (for life) but Jesus Christ, and him crucified?"

Know this, therefore, whatever else you are ignorant of; know who it is that was crucified, and why he was crucified, and it will give you such an opening into the nature of God and the nature of sin, the severity of his justice in the punishment of it, the riches of his goodness in sparing the sinner, as nothing else can.

You will then understand the meaning of those words, Exod. xxxiv. which, without the knowledge of God in Christ, is one of the darkest passages in the Bible. When Moses desired God to show him his glory, in condescension to his request, and for the instruction of all ages, he thus proclaimed himself: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." How is this? Does not one part of the description, or character, which God here gives of himself, seem to contradict the other? What comfort can there be in knowing that he is abundant in grace and goodness, if at the same time we are assured, from his own mouth, that he will by no means clear the guilty, as we all are? Can these things be reconciled? Yes; the iniquity of us all was visited in full measure, the guilt of the whole world was laid upon Christ, when he made his soul an offering for sin; and God (blessed be his name) is hereby found to be just in himself, and true to every tittle of his word, punishing to the utmost, but in such a way as to manifest the exceeding greatness of his mercy, and exalt the glory of his grace in our forgiveness.

Let but the soul once be persuaded of the justice of God as fully satisfied, and that his visitation for sin is already past, and all is clear; it will see the recon-

ciliation of strict punishment with free pardon, rejoice before him in its new state, and account itself as innocent in his sight as Adam was at his first creation. Do you ask how you must come to this blessed belief? Search the Scripture for it, and let the Scripture search *you;* ask yourselves whether Christ was not crucified to discharge the debt of your sin; listen to the preaching of faith; pay but the same regard to the Word of God that you would to the word of any credible person; pray for the Spirit to set it home upon your hearts; and you may be happy all the day long in the sense of his mercy, and dismiss all your fears for ever. I do suppose that you have fears on account of sin, and long to be relieved of that burden. Let those fears bring you to Christ, undone in yourselves, trusting in his merits and all-sufficient sacrifice, despairing of help in every other way, and you are believers. But many who think and call themselves Christians, will never be found in that number. Be not deceived; not those who are ignorant of Christ, and of their need of him, or are unconcerned about their interest in him; not those who never were humbled for sin, or who wish to retain it; none who do not purpose to be governed by Christ; none who are not in a state of prayer for the blessings of Christ; none, I say, of all these, are Christians in reality. You, therefore, who are fearless of sin, careless and unawakened, think what a sad thing it will be for you to have no share in the death of the Saviour, and to go out of the world unhelped, unpardoned, unredeemed. You who know how to value Christ and his salvation, and would not give up your right in him for a thousand worlds, think what reason you have to bless God for this chapter. Let all hear it, and be saved; the doctrine of it is this: Whatever your condition is, if you are the greatest of sinners, the blood of Christ,

whenever you fly to it in repentance, will make you clean; if you are one of the best of mankind, you can only be saved by believing that nothing else can, and that Christ must have died for you, if there never had been another man or woman in the world.

The chapter concludes with an account of our Lord's burial, and it seems as if all the hopes of his followers were buried with him; for, "as yet, they knew not the "Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead." It is, therefore, hard to say with what intent, or kind of belief, Joseph craved the body of Jesus in order to its burial. Doubtless he retained a very high sense of his innocence; and his boldness in going to Pilate was an attestation to it. But, probably, he was divinely over-ruled in what he did; since, if the body had been left hanging on the cross to putrefy, or be devoured by dogs and birds, like those of other crucified malefactors, according to the law of the Romans, or laid in the public place of burial with the two thieves, according to the custom of the Jews, it would have been much more difficult to evince the certainty of his resurrection, on which the truth of his mission, and the credit of his religion, were to depend. Let us not forget that we must all, very soon, lie down in our graves, and rise again to be happy or miserable for ever, as we have believed and lived.

PRAYER.

O Saviour of the world, who, by thy cross and precious blood, hast redeemed us to God, save and help us, we humbly beseech thee. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, and grant us thy peace. Let thy cross humble us, thy death revive us, and thy spirit purify us. Behold, we come to thee, undone in ourselves, trusting only in thy merits, and waiting for thy salvation. Be thou with us, in all the

power of thy grace, with all the riches of thy love, that our hearts may burn within us at the memory of thy passion, and be devoted to thee in a sacred bond of love and gratitude. Remember us, according to the favour that thou bearest unto thy people, that we may remember who thou art, and what we are; remember thee as our Saviour and Master; remember thee, and fear not; remember thee, and sin not; remember thee, to live to thee, by thee, with thee, and praise God eternally for thee, our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION LXV.

St. Matthew, xxviii. 2.

The angel of the Lord, &c. rolled back the stone. — Christ did not want an angel to roll away the stone for him; but this apparition was for the information and conviction of the women.

Ver. 5. *Fear not ye*—Who love and seek Jesus, though timorous women; let the stout-hearted soldiers fear; you have no cause; Christ is yours. Fear not, believers, only say this one thing truly, I know I seek Jesus which was crucified.

Ver. 6. *He is not here.* — Where are you? Risen with Christ, or dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in the cares of a worldly life?

Ver. 8. *With fear and great joy.* — An awful fear, and great joy, may be together; nay, cannot well be separated in a holy soul.

— *And did run to bring his disciples word.* — These were lively souls; and every expression here made use of lays open their hearts.

Ver. 9. *Jesus met them, saying, All hail.*—From Christ's mouth, this was more than a common form of salutation. The word is, Rejoice; as if he had said, "Behold, here I am, risen from the dead, to confirm all "my promises, and give effect to all your wishes." Lord, thy life, thy death, thy resurrection, all speak this word. Speak it to us, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that we may rejoice in thy salvation.

—*And they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*—Know thy want of him, and thou wilt fall down at his feet, hold him fast, and worship him, as thy life, thy Saviour, thy God, thy All.

Ver. 10. *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid.*—This was comfort, indeed, from *his* mouth. Believe in him, and take it to thyself. "Be not afraid;" you need not. Sweet encouragement!

—*Go, tell my brethren*—It was great condescension in Christ to call them, and in them all believers, his brethren. Let us say to him, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my "God."

Ver. 15. *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*—So the devil still supports his kingdom of darkness, and keeps men from the truth by lies and calumnies; no matter how gross. What could be more so than the testimony of men to a fact, which happened when they owned they were asleep?

LECTURE.

All the four Evangelists conclude their account of our Lord's birth, miracles, discourses, and death, with the attestation of his resurrection, together with the several proofs and circumstances of it; knowing that, without this, nothing, that they had related of him, would be

sufficient to establish our faith in him. And this, alone, is so firm a ground of our faith, that if we admit the truth of it, every thing else follows of course. For by this "he "was declared to be the Son of God with power," Rom. i. 4., and his resurrection from the dead is so plain a demonstration of his divine nature and divine mission, that to bear witness to it, to assert and prove it, is mentioned as the sum of the apostolical office, Acts, i. 22. To which purpose it is remarkable what a noted infidel (Spinoza) said, that he should not hesitate a moment to believe in Christ, if he could believe his resurrection.

But there is something more to be understood and considered in the resurrection of Christ, besides its being a divine attestation to his person, office, and character, as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. For as his death was our death, so that all his members suffered with him upon the cross, and there and then paid the debt of sin in and with him; so his resurrection is their resurrection, all believers being raised together, and quickened in him; he with them, and they in him rising again, and sitting together in heavenly places, where they now are in virtue of his right and title, and whither they must follow him at the time appointed in their own persons, as the harvest of which he is the first fruits. These, strange as they may seem, are the very expressions of Scripture; and St. Paul, I conceive, directs us to the precise meaning and full import of them, when he says, that "as in Adam, all "die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor. xv. 22. We die, as being in Adam, who, by his sin, brought death into the world. "Even so," says the apostle, or exactly in the same manner, "in Christ shall "all," that is, all the just, of whom only, and their resurrection, he speaks throughout the chapter, "be made "alive;" he being the Father of mankind for life, as Adam was for death. Insomuch, that if he had not con-

quered death in our nature, as the head and representative of it, having all his members in himself, and accomplishing their resurrection at the same time with his own, not one of all the human race could ever have risen happily from the dead, any more than we can vacate the law of death, and exempt ourselves from the necessity of dying, as being the descendants of Adam, and born under the same sentence of mortality. And from this great mystery of our religion, which is also the great glory and peculiar consolation of it, that "God has "gathered together in one all things in Christ," Eph. i. 10, that "when we were dead in sins, he quickened us "together with Christ, and raised us up together, and "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ "Jesus," to the end we might know that "by grace "we are saved through faith," Eph. ii. 5. 8, that "He is "the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the "first-born from the dead," Col. i. 18; that "our life is "hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3; and that in union with him, and only as members of his body, we are the children of God, heirs of his kingdom, born again to the power of an endless life, and capable of a blessed resurrection: I say, from hence we may observe,

1. That whereas there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust, the wicked will be raised, by the sole power of God, to receive their doom; but the just, as being members of Christ, and one spirit with him, will rise again in virtue of that union, and by the indwelling of the same spirit which raised him from the dead, according to Rom. viii. 10, 11. 1 Cor. xv.

2. From hence it appears in what sense chiefly "life "and immortality were brought to light through the "Gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10. Not merely by a positive declaration of the doctrine of immortality from the mouth of Christ, and the repeated, solemn assurances in the New

Testament of a future judgment, in order to a happy or miserable eternity: but by his abolishing death, or taking away the sin which would for ever have held us under the sentence of it, and by accomplishing a resurrection from it for all believers in his own person. To all who receive the Gospel, the word and testimony of Christ are, doubtless, a sufficient ground of their belief in the point, as they are of every thing else he has delivered to them, either by himself or his apostles; and it is not denied that his authority is of much greater force, to establish the doctrine of a future state, than any reasonings or conjectures of men upon the subject could be; and, in fact, has established it in the world far beyond what it ever was before. But, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there is a deeper meaning in the words, and that they have a peculiar reference to the great discovery of the Gospel here offered to consideration, namely, that therein is revealed the precise *manner* in which a happy immortality was obtained for mankind, and the only way in which it was possible, by Christ's conquest of sin and death. Upon any other supposition St. Paul's assertion can hardly be accounted for, as neither Jews nor Gentiles were ignorant of a future state; and, especially, if the proof drawn from the unequal distribution of things in this world, the wants and sufferings of some good men, compared with the lot of others, eminently bad, and urged for the necessity of a future adjustment, both before and since the coming of Christ, is of any validity.

We need not fear to affirm that it is of none; first, because it supposes, what may well be denied, that prosperity in this life is better than virtue, and that God's dealings, with those reputed good, would be hard and unjust, if he does not make them large amends hereafter. Secondly, and more particularly, because it is founded upon a presumption of merit in man, and bestows heaven

upon some as their due, and the necessary reward of their goodness; whereas the Gospel strikes at the root of this argument, by expressly pronouncing all to be sinners, liable to a sentence of condemnation, and saved only by grace.

3. From hence, likewise, it appears why Moses did not speak more explicitly of a future state of happiness, and inculcate it more than he has done. He could not, at least not upon its only true or Gospel-ground. That was reserved for the Gospel-time; and the doctrine of life and immortality could not be declared and preached to the world upon right principles, till sin was expiated, death abolished, and the resurrection of the just effected and ensured by the resurrection of Christ.

Upon the whole, it is a very memorable saying of St. John, "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that "hath not the Son of God, hath not life," 1 John, v. 12. How we have him, and are incorporated into him, and live by him, the Scripture tells us, over and over again, namely, by faith; and if the work of our redemption is all his own from first to last, and we have no more share in it than we had in the creation of our souls and bodies, it is not to be conceived how we can be made partakers of his life, righteousness, death, and resurrection, and of all he has done and suffered for us, in any other way than by receiving it as undeserved mercy, to the glory of God. Dearly beloved, we are come full into the truth, if we can say to Jesus — O glorious head of thy church and people? we believe that thou art the Son of God, mighty to save; and that thou tookest the human nature to be our Father for life and immortality; to purge the sin of it; to raise it from the dead; to carry it up triumphantly into heaven, and sit down in it at the right hand of God. Grant that we may, in heart and mind, thither ascend, and "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the

" work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour
" is not in vain in the Lord."

PRAYER.

Holy Lord God, we desire to prostrate ourselves before thee, in a due sense of our vileness, as sinful dust and ashes. We are not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and, behold! thou preventest us with the greatest. Thou hast rescued us by a salvation, which will be the eternal wonder of men and angels. Thou hast redeemed us to thyself by the death of thine own Son, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. In him thou art always well pleased; and because of ourselves we are polluted and unclean in our very best estate, thou hast given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body; and in him receivest us to the happy condition of thy children, washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness, dying, rising again, and ascending with him into heaven, whither he has gone in our nature to take possession of the glory which he hath purchased for us. Lord, we see the exceeding greatness of thy love in the greatness of this mystery, we believe thy word, we adore thy goodness, we rejoice in thy salvation. And as thou hast promised with him graciously to give us all things, we ask of thee to give us a lively faith in this thy mercy; to kindle the fire of love to thee in our hearts; to purify our affections; to confirm us in all holy obedience; and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; not for any desert of ours, but for the sake and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ, to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore. Amen.

SECTION LXVI.

St. Matthew, xxviii. 16.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.—This was the most important meeting, for the greatest designs and happiest ends, that ever was in the world.

Ver. 17. *But some doubted*—That our faith might be the surer, by their not being over hasty in believing.

Ver. 18. *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*—And, in consequence of this power, given to him as man and Mediator, he here solemnly commissions the apostles to set up his kingdom in the world, and gives them their instructions in few words, but containing his whole Gospel, all the love of God to man, and all the duty of man to God.

Ver. 19. *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.*—Not the Jews only, but all other nations of the world. And in virtue of these words, we of this country, as well as others, have been called into the light of the Gospel. Only remember, that this light must be in the heart as well as the book; and if it does not shine there, we are still in the darkness of heathenism, without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world.

—*Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*—That is, into the belief and service of the Father sending, the Son sent to redeem mankind, and of the Holy Ghost working faith, and making our baptism effectual. I say, all the love of God to man, and all the duty of man to God, is contained in these words. The God of the Christians, or Trinity of persons in the Godhead, is here revealed to us in their names and offices, as jointly engaged in the work of our

redemption, and equally entitled to our adoration; and our baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is expressive of our duty, and a most sacred bond upon our souls, to dedicate ourselves to the worship and service of the Holy Trinity; to embrace the salvation offered us, to live worthy of it, and rest all our hopes upon it.

Ver. 20. *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.*—Whatever he gave them in charge to teach, relating either to faith or practice. Therefore, what they teach, he teaches, and it is the same thing as if we had it from his own mouth. The doctrine is his; upon his authority we receive it, and to his power it owes all its efficacy. My dear friends, read the Bible, read for your souls. It will be in vain to plead ignorance, when you have Christ's wisdom before you, the Spirit to guide you into it, and fifty-two sabbaths in a year, besides many spare hours at other times, to learn it in.

—*And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*—To bless what they taught in their preaching and writings, to that and to all succeeding generations; to bless the reading of this Gospel and all Scripture to you; to help and save all believers.

—*Amen.*—We verily believe this Gospel to be the truth of God, and heartily wish it may be the power of God to our souls. Even so, blessed Lord, grant that the belief of it may operate in us to the end for which it was given, and that, acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, we may trust in him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour, submit to his teaching, die to sin, and rise again to newness of life, and be sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption.

LECTURE.

THE Gospels and all Scripture "were written that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, "and that, believing, we might have life through his "name," John, xx. 31. Life is deliverance from the sentence of death we are under for sin, and restoration to the favour of God, and the happy condition of his children; in which we stand before him clear of all blame, and have as sure a title to all the blessings of time and eternity as his word and promise can give us. And when we know and confess, from the bottom of our hearts, that we have no such right in and of ourselves, no power to undo the cursed effects of sin: no repentance that will be available for its own sake, no obedience that we can present to God as the ground of our eternal justification; but look only to Christ for pardon and life, rely on his atonement, plead his righteousness, trust in his merits, and cast ourselves wholly on the mercy of God for salvation through his name, we are believers. To every soul which has the sentence of death in itself, trembles for its guilt, and comes to him for washing in his blood, he fulfils his promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto "the end of the world." For to those who receive him as their Saviour, he manifests his presence by his work; and they may be as sure, from the change wrought in them, by their closing with his word, their love of his salvation, and thankfulness to God for it, that he is with them, in all the compassion of his heart, in all the power of his grace, as if they saw him with their eyes, and heard the words from his own mouth. They were first spoken to the apostles, but in them to all succeeding ministers and preachers of his truth. He brings them now to your remembrance by me; and you are come happily to the conclusion of this Gospel, if what you have heard from it

of his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection, brings you to him in the belief of this promise, and with earnest desire to experience his presence in your own souls. For the meaning of his "being always with them" is, that he would bless their labours, and give effect to their teaching; which he does by the power of his Spirit, "opening men's eyes, turning them from darkness to "light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they "may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among "them, which are sanctified by faith that is in him." So that the promise, though given to them, was for your sakes, that you might hear and be saved, is now, and always will be, fulfilling to the end of the world. Of his power to fulfil it, by the supply of all your spiritual wants, you can have no doubt; the miracles he wrought are an infallible proof of it; and, as I have often had occasion to observe in the course of our reading, we then make the right use of them, and convert them to our own benefit, when we are convinced by them that he is "the Christ, "the Son of the living God, and able to save to the "uttermost all that come unto God by him." Of the love he has for you, and will to save you, let his death bear witness. And, oh! be not wanting to yourselves. Let your own wills, and the desire of your own hearts, be with him in the work of your salvation. Let him not live and die in vain as to you. See yourselves perishing and helpless without him; think what he did and suffered to redeem you from the everlasting death of your souls and bodies; think what grace is offered you, and what glory is prepared for you; come one and all to the Saviour. Know who he is, and what you are. Do not deceive yourselves with thinking and saying, as too many do, that you have a good faith, when you have none at all; but are ignorant of your condition in sin, feel no want of Christ, and were never inwardly stirred up to seek after his benefits. Do

not pretend that you do this or that, as if you could save yourselves. Do not say you live quietly and do no harm, or perhaps some good. Say this, and say it truly; but not to keep yourselves blind, not to deny God's charge against you, not to put Christ from you. The word of Scripture is, "repent, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out," that is, by the blood of Christ. For sin is unknown, and all repentance for it is false, or far short of what it should be, if we think it can be blotted out with any thing else. But is it, can it be so purged? Yes, blessed be God, it is; and if we believe this, our faith will be accounted to us for righteousness. Beloved, this is the great mystery and great glory of the Gospel, the joy and life of believers, that we who are unrighteous in ourselves, and always sinners, should be made righteous in Christ. Not to continue in sin, God forbid; but that we may love much, because much has been forgiven us. For the faith by which we believe to the saving of the soul humbles us in the dust, and is also of a converting, purifying nature; and when we know and rejoice in this truth, that "we are saved by grace," as we must if ever we are saved, we shall "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure," and put ourselves without reserve into God's hands, that we may be "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

PRAYER.

Blessed God, we are bound to thank thee for the Gospel, and for the Saviour therein revealed, and offered to our belief. Give us, we beseech thee, a true knowledge of him, and a lively experience of his continual presence with us. Make us know and feel that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; make him our hope and crown of rejoicing, and bring us to him in repentance and faith for

all his blessings. Let thy word be our guide to him, and by him to thee, the God of all our mercies. Enable us to say we are thine, thy redeemed, thy children, and joint-heirs with Christ, thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased. Raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us. Open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace; that, knowing thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, we may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, adore thy great name, bless thee for thy mercy, serve thee in love, and rejoice before thee all the days of our life, in hope of the glory which shall be revealed in us, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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